Visible Minorities and the Public Service of Canada

A report submitted to the
Canadian Human Rights Commission

by *John Samuel & Associates Inc., Ottawa*

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ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

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Executive Summary

Visible minorities are an integral part of Canadian society. Their proportion in the labour force rose from 5.9% in 1986 to 9.1% in 1991, and is estimated to be about 12% in 1996. Despite this, their representation in the Canadian public service has increased only from 2.7% in 1987 to 4.1% in 1995. For Canada, known to be a racially-tolerant country in the community of nations, such a low level of visible minority representation in its public service is less than acceptable.

Indications are that the federally-regulated private sector is doing much better in hiring visible minorities. Between 1987 and 1994, the visible minority group representation in the private sector increased from 5.0% to 8.2% of the labour force. The five major chartered banks had a representation level in the range of 10.7% to 18.2% in 1995. Interestingly some banks assert that visible minority employees in their workforce help to increase productivity and profitability.

Given the above numbers, the Canadian Human Rights Commission initiated this study to provide the public service with constructive input by identifying elements in hiring practices and in the workplace environment that may help to explain the statistical patterns observed above.

Fourteen departments and agencies were chosen in order for the study to reflect a representation of the public service. They ranged in size from the very large to small; some had greater success in hiring visible minorities, and some appeared to be making a greater effort to do this. More than 2,000 employees of these departments volunteered to participate.

The multi-faceted approach undertaken in the study involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The groups that received questionnaires, participated in focus groups or were interviewed were: visible minority employees including a group of former public servants, a control group of non-visible minority public servants; public servants with staffing/managing responsibilities, and the executives known as EXs - primarily Assistant Deputy Ministers and directors general.

Twelve private sector firms also received a questionnaire, and eight high-ranking human resources officials of the private sector were interviewed along with the former president of the Canadian Bankers' Association.

Both visible minority employees and public service managers, including EXs, expressed the view that racial discrimination against visible minorities is prevalent in the public service. However, it was clear from the questionnaires and focus group meetings that discrimination per se tells only part of the story. A significant number of other factors were cited by both groups contributing to the low representation of visible minorities. These included:

- A lack of flexibility in the staffing process, which reduces the scope for creativity in outreach, recruitment and selection standards.

- A perception that candidates for appointments and promotions are "pre-selected", and the failure to factor in visible minority representation into the composition of hiring boards. As a result, some visible minority employees have screened themselves out of competitions because they believe they cannot win.

- Difficulty in getting information on jobs and their requirements, both for people who want to enter the public service and for those who want to progress within it.

- A certain level of discomfort with the workplace environment and the feeling that networking, kinship and social ties play a major role in hiring and promotion.

- The overall perception of the public service by visible minority communities, exacerbated by "public service bashing", cultural biases against public service employment, and low salary levels for some professions in comparison with the private sector.

- The lack of a simple yet structured approach to career development and training opportunities. Problems often cited included the lack of information, accessibility, encouragement and funds.

- A failure to focus efforts to hire visible minorities into senior management. The absence of a critical mass of visible minority senior managers means that employees do not see themselves reflected in the top echelons. Without this critical mass, it is harder to encourage visible minority employees inside the system to aspire to senior management positions.

- A continuing need for diversity training opportunities; not just courses and job fairs, but focused training for managers about how to build diversity into daily processes; and training for people entering the public service to understand and cope with the environment.

- A perception that public service managers - from the top on down - are not fully committed to increasing visible minority representation. This commitment must be strengthened and demonstrated through concrete action, integration of employment equity objectives into business plans, and accountability for producing results.

Particularly significant were comments related to flexibility, on the one hand, and accountability on the other. Participants in the study said that hiring policies and procedures - restrictions on external recruitment, for example - are insufficiently flexible to provide increased employment opportunities for visible minorities. At the same time, at least some participants felt that visible minorities were adversely affected when managers use their discretion, for example, in the case of acting appointments or deployments. One might conclude that an increase in flexibility and

manager discretion will only be effective if managers are held accountable for the successful implementation of employment equity goals; and that these goals are factored into all aspects of the staffing process.

Conclusion

The most significant point made by all the participants in this study is that commitment at the highest level of authority is a must to herald change. Once that commitment is there, the process can begin in earnest to establish and accomplish diversity goals that fully reflect the spirit and the law of both the *Public Service Employment Act* and the *Employment Equity Act*.

What the public service needs is not quotas for visible minorities but a removal of barriers to make sure that real merit is recognized and rewarded. The study's recommendations are put forward to facilitate the changes that are necessary for a public service on the threshold of the 21st century. Canada needs a public service that is dynamic, adaptive and productive. For this, the Canadian public service needs a new diversity strategy.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all those who assisted with the study.

From the very beginning of the study, the Treasury Board Secretariat agreed to facilitate access to and share the information available centrally on visible minorities in the public service. The Secretariat wrote to the fourteen participating departments and agencies selected for the study requesting their cooperation in facilitating this initiative of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The Public Service Commission assisted us in meeting the information needs on their programs and services.

The fourteen departments and agencies (see Chapter 1) chosen for the study rendered invaluable help in making this study a success despite constraints imposed by the summer season. The employment equity coordinators and committees in various departments and/or agencies, and in particular the visible minority advisory committees, where they existed, provided helpful practical advice on procedures, and offered suggestions about approaches to be used. They helped to publicize the study and commented on draft questionnaires, distributed them and collected and forwarded to us names of prospective participants for the focus groups, and attended information meetings. Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers in some departments wrote to all employees requesting them to cooperate. Several senior public servants spared the time to discuss with us some of the issues and possible solutions.

The unions, approached through the National Joint Committee Employment Equity Subcommittee, were quite enthusiastic about the study. The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada publicized the study through its publication, *Communications*. The Public Service Alliance of Canada issued a special memorandum on the study. The unions also commented on draft questionnaires and urged their members to participate.

Senior personnel from a number of firms chosen from the private sector filled out questionnaires and took the time most willingly to be interviewed on their policies and practices regarding visible minority recruitment, retention, promotion and workplace environmental issues.

We are most thankful to those who attended the focus groups, and who expressed their views candidly, filled out the questionnaires, volunteered information on the issues through letters, phone calls, e-mail, and copies of relevant reports. Without their willing cooperation and candid views it would not have been possible to conclude the study so successfully. The summer season and the normal vacation periods posed particular challenges for the study. However, the participants showed patience and were willing to give us the benefit of their ideas and observations based on experience. The hiring and/or managing group in the public service and the executives (EXs) in particular showed considerable interest in the study by responding to the questionnaires and participating in focus groups.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As of March 31, 1995 there were 8,914 visible minority employees in the federal public service, 4.1% of the total as against a workforce availability of 9.1%. Very few departments have attained the labour force availability level of visible minorities nationally. Hiring of visible minorities into the public service currently remains at 2.7% annually. Moreover, it is likely that a higher percentage of visible minorities will depart (retirements, resignations and deaths) the public service because of their age profile, so that future representation of visible minorities could actually fall while the labour force availability of visible minorities rises (estimated to be 12% in 1996) in conjunction with their increase in population (see Chart 1).

The federally-regulated private sector has had much more success in bringing the representation of members of visible minorities into line with labour force availability. The representation of visible minorities in this sector in 1994 stood at 8.2%, double the rate for the public service. The banks have been in the vanguard. In 1995, the five major chartered banks in Canada had between 10.7% and 18.2% of their workforce from visible minorities. Among "upper level managers" in 1995, 5.4% were visible minorities in the Bank of Montreal, closely followed by the Bank of Nova Scotia (4.6%), while the comparable levels in the public service (the EXs) remained at 2.4%.

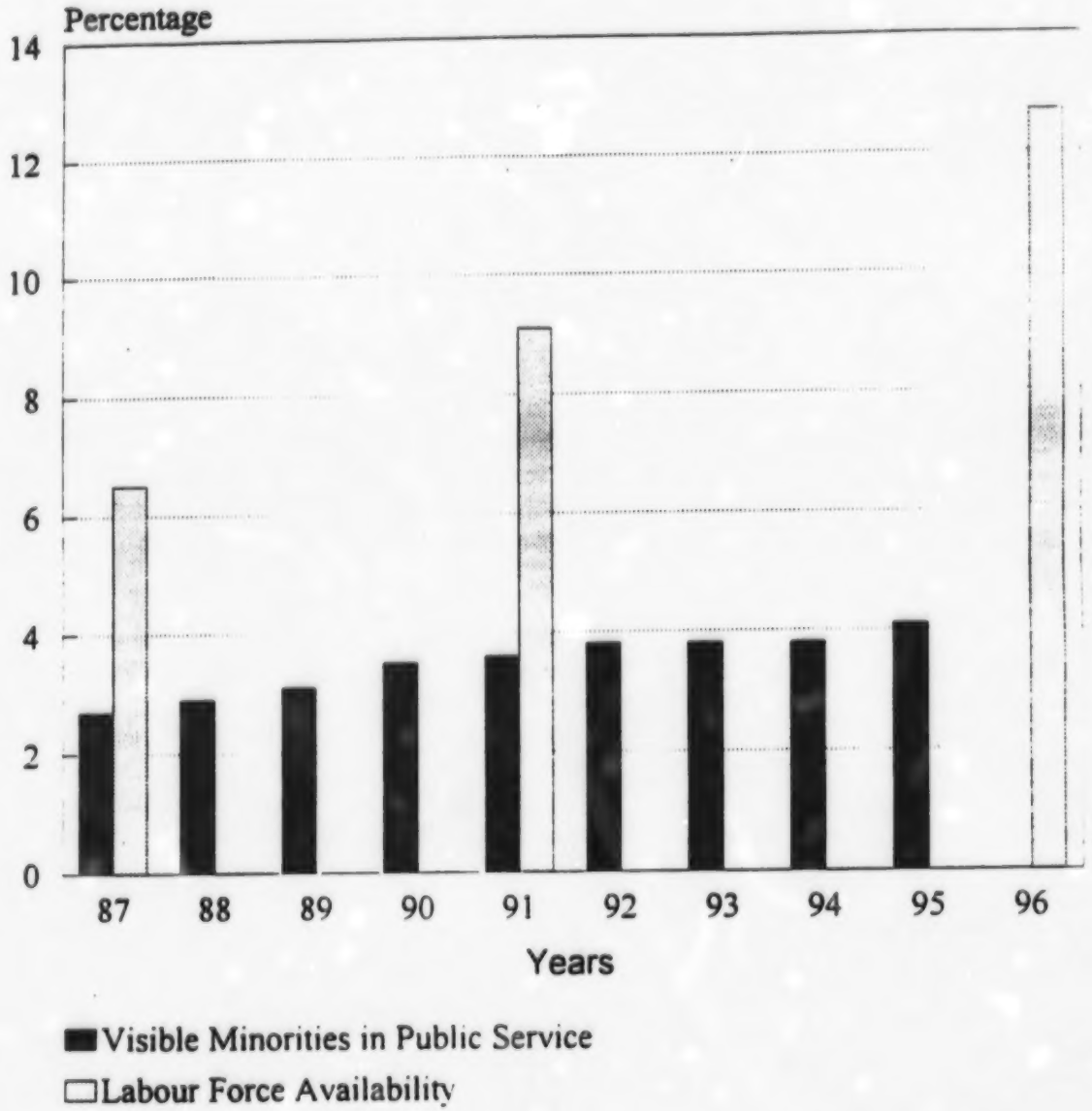
Geographic factors cannot fully account for different performance of the public and private sectors; in fact, in Ontario -- the province with the highest concentration of visible minority members -- visible minority representation in the public service falls well short of labour force availability (5.2% vs. 12.6%), while representation among federally-regulated private sector employers (13.16%) approximates availability. And the problem is not merely a historical "hangover" of past hiring practices: even today, the percentage of new recruits to the public service who are members of visible minorites is still about half their percentage in the labour market availability.

This study was undertaken with the aim of providing the public service with constructive input by identifying elements in hiring practices and the workplace environment that may help explain the statistical patterns outlined above.

1.1 Methodology

Fourteen departments and agencies were selected for the study to represent a wide spectrum of the Canadian public service. Some were large, others small; some had greater success in the hiring of visible minorities than others; some appeared to be making greater efforts than others in becoming more representative of the visible minority labour force.

Chart 1: Representation Levels of Visible Minorities in the Public Service, Compared With Their Labour Force Availability in Census Years 1987 - 1996



Sources: Treasury Board Secretariat, Statistics Canada, John Samuel & Associates Inc.

The departments and agencies chosen were: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Correctional Service of Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Environment Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, National Defence, the Public Service Commission of Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Revenue Canada, Statistics Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada.

The study's methodology was primarily qualitative. Altogether, over 2,000 individuals participated in the study by filling out questionnaires, attending focus groups, and participating in personal interviews. Many others communicated their views through letters, faxes, e-mail and telephone calls, and sent relevant reports. The details on the questionnaires and focus groups are contained in Annex 1.

Respect for confidentiality meant that it was not possible to choose a random sample of participants. However, a comparison of the characteristics of the respondents and those of the visible minorities in the public service showed that, for the visible minority questionnaire, we had obtained a 12 percent sample, which roughly matched the universe of visible minorities in the public service with respect to characteristics such as sex and occupation, as seen in Annex 1. In addition, the distribution of visible minority participants was not too far from the ethnic distribution of visible minorities in Canada. The three major groups among visible minorities in Canada are the Chinese, South Asians and Blacks; the same was true for the respondents for the survey, as seen in Annex 1.

The relative representativeness of participants notwithstanding, no claim is made that the study is a "perfect" reflection of reality. However, its results are certainly indicative of the key issues facing visible minority employees in the public service.

The study was based on the following elements: (a) a review of literature on the situation of visible minority employees in the public service mostly in the 1990s; (b) a statistical comparison of representation of visible minority employees in the public service and of the private sector under federal jurisdiction; (c) an analysis of policies and practices relating to hiring and workplace environment; (d) completion of written questionnaires from a certain number of visible minority employees in the public service, from a control group of non-visible minority employees, from the hiring/managing group, and from the EX group and from a small number of private sector firms; (e) interviews with key persons (mostly at the Assistant Deputy Minister and Director General levels) in the fourteen departments and agencies, and with a small number of human resources managers in the private sector; and (f) focus groups of visible minorities, non-visible minority public servants, hiring and/or managing personnel and a group of former visible minority public servants.

1.2 Focus Groups

Thirty-eight focus groups were organized across Canada. Face-to-face focus groups took place in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Telefocus groups run from Ottawa involved participants from all provinces. Altogether, 378 individuals participated. The size of the groups varied from one to 21. Separate focus groups were held whenever possible for: (a) visible minority public servants, (b) a control group of non-visible minority public servants, (c) those in hiring and/or managing group, and (d) former public servants. The participants expressed their views candidly and provided valuable information that has been used in the report.

1.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with fourteen Assistant Deputy Ministers and Directors General in the public service, human resources managers in eight different private sector organizations, and the former President of the Canadian Bankers' Association. Many also provided us with written materials useful for the study.

Summary: Chapter 1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the study and outline its aims and methodology.

- Representation of members of visible minorities in the federal public service is lower than expected given their representation in the Canadian workforce as a whole. It is also below comparable figures for federally-regulated private sector employers.
- The study aims to provide the public service with constructive suggestions about important factors that may contribute to low representation levels.
- Fourteen federal departments and agencies, and over 2,000 individuals, participated in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature on Visible Minorities and the Public Service

2.1 Introduction

Canada is respected in the community of nations as a racially-tolerant country. The question arises: "How does Canada measure up in its treatment of visible minorities in its own public service?" The following literature survey looks at some of the studies and reports related to employment equity for visible minority employees in the federal public service.

Canada's population and labour force have changed significantly as a result of immigration. By 1991, 9.1% of Canada's labour force belonged to a visible minority. The visible minority segment of the population and labour force are bound to grow further in the years to come in view of continuing immigration and an increase in Canadian-born visible minorities.

2.2 Origins of employment equity

Relatively high levels of immigration from developing countries and the affirmative action program in the US have given a boost to "employment equity" programs in Canada. Several studies revealed in the 1980s that persons with origins in developing countries experienced higher rates of unemployment and earned less than other Canadians, and had difficulty finding work in their chosen fields (Samuel, 1996). Two significant reports in 1984 shaped the future of employment equity initiatives in Canada. In that year, the Parliamentary Committee on Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society produced a report, *Equality Now!* The report pointed out that Canadian society constitutes a "vertical mosaic" in which some ethnic groups were, economically and socially, more privileged than others. Eighty recommendations were put forward, of which several were aimed at employment.

The second was a Royal Commission report by Judge Rosalie Abella, *Equality in Employment*, which pointed out that the American term, "affirmative action", often sparks a negative emotional reaction as it is equated with reverse discrimination, or hiring and promotion based on target group membership, rather than merit. The term "employment equity" was coined to refer to measures to eliminate discriminatory employment barriers and procedures. The report proposed employment equity as a "strategy to obliterate the present and the residual effects of discrimination and to open equitably the competition for employment opportunities to those arbitrarily excluded. It requires a special blend of what is necessary, what is fair, and what is workable" (Abella, 1984:254).

These two reports prepared the ground for the *Employment Equity Act* of 1986 that applied to federally-regulated employers with 100 or more employees (representing about one-tenth of the Canadian labour force) but excluded the federal public service, the RCMP and the military. A new *Employment Equity Act* came into force on October 24, 1996, bringing almost all of the public service under its purview.

2.3 Treasury Board initiatives

In April 1985, a Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) survey revealed that 3,791 persons (1.7%) identified themselves as visible minorities in the public service compared to 4.3 percent in the Canadian labour force in 1981. TBS asked the Public Service Commission (PSC) to implement a number of special measures aimed at facilitating the self-identification of visible minorities, and the monitoring of the recruitment, referral, appointment and training processes. A special employment program of up to 300 person-years for 1986-89 was announced. This program assisted in recruiting visible minority persons by paying for the first year of an appointment to an indeterminate position or for six months of a developmental term position with the understanding that the latter action would lead to an appointment to an indeterminate position.

In order to understand the visible minority issue better and with a view to finding consultative solutions, the Treasury Board Secretariat appointed in early 1990s a Visible Minority Consultation Group (VMCG) on Employment Equity. The VMCG produced reports in 1992 and 1993 addressing a number of important questions. Among them was the question of self-identification and the reluctance of visible minorities to self-identify. Self-identification does not provide any direct benefits, some visible minorities said. Some feared that the reverse may be true. Other reasons cited for not self-identifying were: it has nothing to do with merit; it is distasteful and is an invasion of privacy.

The VMCG pointed to the need to develop a "supportive culture that facilitates new visions and ways of working" as "a fundamental pre-requisite to any success that may be achieved in employment equity" (Visible Minority Consultation Group on Employment Equity, 1992:4) for visible minorities. The Group held the view that the Scientific and Professional category seems to have become a trap for visible minorities. The extent to which their concentration in that category affects their ability and propensity to gain access to management is not clear but is certainly worthy of further investigation because it is one of the principal feeder groups to the management category. The VMCG also noted that about a fifth of the management rank is appointed from outside the public service, but few visible minority employees are recruited this way. Moreover, the VMCG noted the "double jeopardy" faced by visible minority women.

The VMCG said that time alone will not correct the situation of under-representation of visible minority employees at the management level and recommended "efforts similar in scope to those designed to increase the representation of francophones and women in the public service". As the VMCG report put it: "It is bad judgment to try to draw 100% of the talent from 75% of the available population".

Visible minority employees, it was found, were well represented in Ontario, (outside the National Capital Region), Alberta and British Columbia, especially on the front lines. The need for management training was at the core of the visible minority issue. The VMCG also drew attention to the corporate culture built on misconceptions, such as employment equity is a "leg-up" for the disadvantaged, and perhaps the unqualified, or is designed to compensate for past wrongs and runs counter to the merit principle. While many visible minority public servants are cynical about employment equity, some public service managers are guilty of stereotyping minorities. The VMCG strongly argued for a "higher profile and priority" for employment equity and urged stronger "political will to pursue it vigorously".

The VMCG found that "employment practices are believed by most visible minority employees interviewed to be unfair, to lack integrity, and to be racially biased". These views were corroborated by a majority of those at the management and even senior management levels. They wondered whether the interest in employment equity was real or whether it was just more window dressing. The report referred to the "abuse of acting appointments", the perception that selection boards for promotion are "mock boards", "a farce", and accord too much weight to the "personal suitability" factor, and complaints about "old boy" and "new girl" networks that work against visible minorities. A two-pronged strategy was proposed: 1) improving the culture of the public service for visible minority employees through persistent, visible leadership by Deputy Ministers; and 2) preparing visible minorities for full participation at all levels, especially with respect to access to and promotion within management. Accountability was stressed as a means of improving the climate for employment equity for visible minorities.

2.4 The views of non-governmental organizations

Despite the Treasury Board initiatives in the late 1980s, the representation of visible minorities in the public service was only half that of their representation level among federally-regulated employers in the early 1990s. Such low levels made interest groups critical of the Canadian Government and its efforts to bring about employment equity for visible minorities in the public service. In a 1992 report entitled *Employment Inequity*, the Canadian Ethnocultural Council said that the public service has no leadership when it comes to the issue and the Government in general and several key departments in particular are setting a poor example to the private sector.

A 1995 report by the Canadian Alliance for Visible Minorities characterized the shrinking public service as a "bureaucratic institution in a state of demoralization". The present situation was "summarized by three words -- flux, uncertainty and fear". The report itemized a number of perceived problems and issues with the public service. It drew attention to excessively long management procedures, concentration of power in the hands of senior managers, ineffectiveness of personnel departments and employment equity offices, absence of skill inventories, shrinking opportunities and managers paying only lip service to visible minority issues. Other major issues were: exclusion of visible minorities on the basis of personal suitability; poorly-defined performance measurement criteria; lack of concern for and interest in visible minority issues; the narrow scope of the appeal process; non-acceptance of visible minority employees in the

bureaucratic corporate culture; lack of mentors for visible minority employees; and a tendency to stonewall any wrong doing on the part of managers.

The report also referred to some factors such as fear of reprisals by visible minority employees, their unfamiliarity with the intricacies of the system, and the difficulty visible minority employees encounter in dealing with corporate culture. It observed that "because the concepts of performance and efficiency have very elastic meanings in the bureaucratic system, the merit principle becomes a noble fiction without any credibility" (Canadian Alliance of Visible Minorities, 1995:21). The report concluded that the "documentation and advice available attempt to show that the system can accommodate them (visible minorities) provided they follow the marvellous path to nowhere. And in case they cannot reach their target it is simply their fault. This is an ideal case of blaming the victim" (ibid:25).

2.5 Some departmental initiatives

There are a few reports on visible minorities and the public service that have been produced by different government departments. Reports were available from the Department of Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration and Health Canada. They are summarized below.

Department of Canadian Heritage

The report from the Department of Canadian Heritage completed in 1996 was the result of a survey and consultations with all the visible minority employees of the department. The survey discovered that 85.5% of the visible minorities had self-identified.

Respondents were asked a variety of questions concerning their employment experience in the department. The study found that the majority of managers and supervisors were perceived as needing more cross-cultural training and sensitization skills. It suggested that "there seems to be an institutional bias against the promotion of visible minority employees, especially into management and supervisory positions" (Multicom, 1996:9), and that managers themselves would benefit from cross-cultural training. For a majority of the respondents, solutions involve management becoming more sensitive to visible minority employees' viewpoints and more skillful in intercultural communication.

It was suggested that in order to attract more visible minorities to the public service, they should be present within the organization and in planning branches, selection boards, senior management, and Minister's office. More assignment programs were proposed and managers could submit the names of those available for assignment indicating their willingness to accept others. Monitoring of the competition process and dealing fairly with grievances were suggested. "There is no need to do anything special, just do everything fairly", the report emphasized.

More than four out of 10 visible minority employees in the Department felt that their career development has been hindered because of their visible minority status. The factors responsible

were said to be: institutional bias against the promotion of visible minority employees, little backing for grievances from the union, lack of vision on the part of management, negative reactions from clients, and lack of training.

The requirement for proficiency in the French language was seen as an obstacle to the furthering of their careers. It was suggested that cultural orientation workshops on matters such as Canadian corporate culture would be helpful for new Canadians joining the public service, while cross-cultural communication training programs would benefit all employees.

A mentor program was proposed as a way of piloting employees through the professional waters of career development. It was important to talk to a mentor who is knowledgeable and trustworthy in the context of career development.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

An Administrative Review by TLC Enterprises prepared for Citizenship and Immigration in 1996 sought to "examine corporate culture, values, and systems in the CPC (Central Processing Centre) Vegreville with a view to enhancing respect in the workplace for all individuals", and understanding the context of alleged racial harassment of visible minorities on the job and in the community. The focus of the review was the CPC's ability to provide a respectful work environment for all its employees.

The Administrative Review team interviewed a number of visible minority employees who had raised the issue and a number of managers to see whether CPC Vegreville was a respectful workplace. The consultants defined "a respectful workplace as one where there is an active and open line of communication between all levels of staff; where there is a degree of security that allows for a person to receive and offer positive/constructive criticism; where a mutual respect for others, regardless of differences, underlies all workplace activity; and where professionalism and a set standard of conduct are upheld by all staff and supported by management". The consultants concluded that CPC Vegreville "is not a harassment-free environment. Because of changes over time, the workplace has developed sufficient elements to determine that it is a hostile environment for visible minority groups.

The report presented recommendations to the staff and management. The staff was asked to seek clarification if a staffing action appears to be invalid, to resist making racist comments, to use the complaint process to resolve situations that cannot be resolved otherwise, and to avoid attributing motives to other people's actions.

It was proposed that management should develop a system so that the staff could get information on any competition process in order to reassure them of the fairness of the process on a one to one basis; have a person outside of CPC on the staffing boards; have a Diversity Management Committee with equal numbers of visible minority employees and non-visible minority staff; arrange for speakers on various cultures for all staff; inform managers that it is their responsibility

to maintain a harassment-free workplace environment; develop an equity plan; to the extent possible have someone from an equity group sit on selection boards as a member; and monitor results of appointments and acting assignments to ensure equitable distribution among all staff, including visible minority employees.

Health Canada

The Visible Minority Advisory Committee (VMAC) was established in Health Canada in 1991 to advise the Department on all issues concerning recruitment, retention, and promotion practices as they apply to members of visible minority communities. In the following year VMAC in a report recommended that the Department: (a) establish a culturally diverse Cross-cultural Unit to analyze and make recommendations on diversity; (b) establish mechanisms to actively recruit visible minorities; (c) increase the representation of visible minority employees on departmental selection boards; (d) establish mechanisms to ensure that visible minority employees are represented fairly at all levels, and in all categories; (e) recognize, use, and develop the skills of visible minority employees within the department; (f) give training to managers and supervisors to value a culturally diverse workforce; (g) evaluate managers on their performance in managing and valuing a culturally-diverse workforce; and (h) implement a department-wide educational initiative to increase employees' sensitivity to cross-cultural issues. Appropriate action steps were proposed to implement the recommendations.

2.6 The Unions

Among the unions, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) prepared and submitted a brief in 1996 to the Anti-racism Task Force of the Canadian Labour Congress. The brief considered racism as a "state of mind that is passed on from generation to generation, and fosters hatred and ignorance" (PSAC, 1996:5). The authors of the brief wanted the unions to be pro-active and indicated the importance of a critical mass of visible minority members in visual positions of the union when addressing race-related issues. The issue of networking was underlined and they endorsed the requirement that a racial minority person should have a seat on each of the national bargaining teams. Their recommendations included: representation of visible minorities at executive levels within the labour movement; a self-identification program for its membership vis-a-vis race; recognition of foreign credentials as part of contract negotiations, and that being from a different culture or religion should not make one better or worse; design and delivery of anti-racism courses by racially visible members; and funding more minority delegates to attend conferences and conventions.

Summary: Chapter 2
Literature Review

This chapter reviews previous efforts by federal departments and non-governmental organizations to study the situation of visible minorities in the federal public service. It describes the conclusions and recommendations of those studies.

- Several studies have pointed to difficulties faced by visible minority public servants, including:
  - Misperceptions about employment equity;
  - Stereotypes about and biases against visible minorities;
  - A lack of management commitment;
  - Demoralization;
  - The rigidity of employment systems; and
  - Official-language requirements
- Key recommendations of these studies were:
  - Senior-level leadership;
  - Cross-cultural training;
  - Representation of members of visible minorities in key organizational activities; and
  - Mentoring programs.
- A general thread in the literature was the slowness of institutional change in the public service.

CHAPTER THREE

Review of Hiring Policies and Practices

3.1 Introduction

The review of written policies was initiated to ensure that we understood the staffing process of the public service and that the review instruments used during the study reflected the reality of the environment. The review was limited to those policies regulating recruitment and selection as described in the Staffing Manual of the Public Service Commission (PSC). These policies have a direct impact on hiring and promotions, areas identified as a concern for visible minority candidates.

In addition, we examined several application forms, the Generic Delegated Authority Agreement and samples of entry level testing. While the Collective Agreements were not reviewed, the Master Agreement was examined. This was supplemented by information on policies and practices from interviews and questionnaires from managers, and employees.

The review was not meant to be a comprehensive systems review, as this would have been beyond the scope of this project. It did not include items such as an examination of job descriptions, and staffing files. Moreover, because each department has its own staffing directives as they relate to their delegated authorities, these departmental policies were not examined. Finally, flow data was not available to us to analyze the effect of hiring practices on visible minority candidates. This review of staffing policies is hence limited.

Public service employment practices are guided by a very comprehensive framework. Making it distinctive is the fact that employment policies and practices are governed by a specific piece of legislation, the Public Service Employment Act, which is supplemented by the Public Service Employment Regulations and a significant number of polices and guidelines issued by the Public Service Commission and the Treasury Board Secretariat.

3.2 The Public Service Employment Act

The Public Service Employment Act (PSEA) requires that appointments be based on the merit principle. The goal is to ensure that the people of Canada are served by a public service that is highly competent, non-partisan, and representative of Canadian society.

The system is designed to ensure that practices are: fair, which is defined as being objective, free from patronage, and providing just treatment; equitable, which is defined as being free from barriers; and transparent which is defined as ensuring open communication.

The main components of the staffing process are described below:

Delegation of authority

The law provides the PSC the authority to delegate staffing responsibilities. The PSC delegates to Deputy Ministers and heads of agencies the authority for staffing: they in turn delegate to managers. Initial decisions by managers include:

- Selection of available processes
- Choice of number and timing of vacancies
- Decision on time and cost of filling vacancy
- Determination as to whether permanent or temporary
- Determination as to whether a manager will make an appointment or offer deployment, assignment or secondment (not considered appointments).

Preliminary responsibilities

Preliminary responsibilities conferred on managers include:

a) Establishment of a written statement of qualifications (which always includes language, may include education, occupational certification, experience, knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitudes and personal suitability);

b) Consideration of priorities whereby managers must consider all persons who have priority status first. If no priority person is appointed, the manager can proceed with another staffing action and

c) Selection of staffing options: i.e. a choice between two types of competitions:

- Closed competitions
- Open competitions (which can be held to fill entry-level positions, to hire people with specific skills, or for short-term - casual - work.)

Staffing process

The main steps in the staffing process are:

a) Preparation of a competition notice (or poster); includes area of selection, closing date, qualifications required and notice of period of employment;

b) Determination of the candidates who meet the screening requirements;

c) Decision of manager about requirements for further assessment: written test, simulation exercise, interview, reference checks;

d) Decision of manager about qualified candidates to be put on an eligibility list, in order of merit;

e) Communication of results to candidates;

f) Other applicable conditions, i.e. medical, reliability and security;

g) For new employees, period of probation.

Other appointments

Appointments without competition are possible when a manager judges that this would be in the "best interests" of the public service. Such appointments include:

- Acting appointments: Fill or compete for higher level positions to be occupied for a temporary period.

- Assignments and secondments: Fill positions on a temporary basis.

- Deployments: Fill a position, for example, by moving an employee to another position in order to gain experience, or to change departments. In this case, the employee must meet the requirements of the job.

The Public Service staffing process is guided by systematized and institutionalized policies and procedures as dictated by its policy manuals and directives. It tends to be somewhat cumbersome, involving a high degree of paper work on the part of personnel involved in the process, a requirement justified by the very public and "political" nature of the public service. The rules, regulations and procedures of the staffing process are controlled centrally within the Public Service Commission. However, efforts are presently being made to decentralize the staffing process and delegate responsibility to each department. Staffing of executive positions, however, remain the full responsibility of the PSC.

Comments

The fact that staffing is governed directly by law and related regulations tends to make the process somewhat rigid though there are provisions in the Act that would allow a certain degree of flexibility. If the PSC is to delegate staffing authority and confer more flexibility in its systems, it must ensure that the staffing actions collectively are not to have a negative effect on designated groups, especially on visible minorities. At the same time, to secure accountability towards the Canadian taxpayer, it would need to develop a more effective accountability and control mechanism to monitor the impact and effectiveness of staffing policies.

3.3 Recruitment

There is a perception on the part of focus group members that there is a lack of information on employment opportunities and that candidates for many positions are pre-selected. Policy dictates that managers are to determine the geographic, organizational and occupational criteria which employees must meet to be eligible to compete. Restricting the areas of selection may assist managers in limiting the number of applicants but it may, inadvertently, limit the flow of employment information to all candidates, including visible minority candidates. Since there is a problem regarding representation of visible minority employees, these policies might have a negative effect on them and thus should be reviewed for adverse impact. The minimum area of selection can be expanded when it does not provide for a sufficiently broad pool of candidates.

In light of public service downsizing, external recruitment has become more restricted. The inventory is now closed except for specific positions. This has been identified by focus group participants as having a potentially negative impact on visible minority candidates outside the public service, and policies related to methods of recruitment may need to be examined further.

Policy allows the PSC to "actively recruit members of under-represented groups to meet department needs". However, focus group participants have indicated that they believe that this is not being done, at least, not actively.

Recruitment without competition is possible "when, in the opinion of the PSC it is in the best interest of the Public Service." (Public Service Commission, 1994:5-12) The phrase "in the best interest of the Public Service" is often used as an "exception clause" for many policies and yet it is not stated what that means or how the government will monitor these "exceptions". It may be advisable to define the terminology whenever possible - for example, to specify that they can be used for the appointment of members of Employment Equity target groups - and also to monitor these appointments for adverse impact on visible minorities.

Policy encourages the display of competition notices which are "readily accessible"; however, the minimum acceptable coverage is one location ... in each building or complex. It may be appropriate to ensure a better distribution of notices since focus group participants have identified a problem in obtaining information on employment opportunities.

3.4 Selection criteria

Policy stipulates that qualifications must reflect the work to be performed. For instance, policy dictates that:

- the statement of qualifications serves as the basis for the assessment of candidates.

- assessment methods include interviews, samples of previous work, simulation exercises, written tests, assessment centre results, and the review of past accomplishments and experience.

- managers have a responsibility to ensure that designated group members take part in selection boards.

However, our interviews and focus group discussions have indicated the following:

- statements of qualifications do not always reflect the essential duties of the position;

- assessment is usually limited to interviews and written tests. (Our interviews with senior public service managers indicate that some managers talk to a few of their select colleagues for information on past accomplishment and experience of potential candidates, prior to the selection process.)

- designated group status is not taken into consideration on a regular basis.

All of these practices need to be examined and corrective action taken as appropriate.

Managers are viewed as the "best source of information" to determine the essential qualifications of a position. Since empirical data is more convincing than subjective assessment, it may be appropriate to combine the manager's assessment with an empirical counterpart such as essential qualifications for comparable positions.

Equivalencies are provided for within the policy manual (ibid:25). It states: "Alternatives to education may be used at the manager's discretion". According to focus group participants, this is not happening. The Public Service Employment Act, Section 13 (2) indicates that"... the Commission may establish different criteria for groups of persons which are disadvantaged." This is not applied by managers, according to focus group participants, but more importantly, it may be appropriate to re-think or re-word this clause. It is important that nothing in policy encourages the perception that designated group members are less qualified than others - a fear which visible minorities have underlined.

With respect to the executive category, minutes of meetings of the Consultative Committee of Chiefs of Staffing dated March 16, 1995, indicated that assessment focuses on generic executive competencies contained in the Profile of Public Service Leaders and Managers tailored to reflect competencies that are particularly valued in today's transition market such as strategic leadership and vision, human resource management skills, and the building and management of partnerships as well as internal teams. The definition of these criteria has been identified by focus group participants as problematic for visible minorities in that the definition is viewed by management in very "American terms" and is culture-based. The "vision sought" does not consider the demographic changes that are projected for the upcoming decades.

3.5 Selection

Appointing from outside the public service is difficult, particularly in these times. For instance, if the highest ranked candidate in an open competition is from outside the public service, "it must be determined if an appointment from outside the public service is in the best interests of the public service" (ibid:4-4).

"Individuals who are entitled to a priority for appointment ... shall be appointed, in priority to all others.. .(ibid:3-3)" In a letter to Chiefs of Staffing dated September 15, 1995, under the heading of consideration of priority persons who are candidates in competitions, it is stated: "when such persons are found qualified, they shall be appointed, regardless of where they may rank in the competitive process." Focus group participants indicate that this rarely happens to the advantage of visible minority candidates.

Focus group participants have also indicated that they did not find that assessments were in fact done on an objective basis to identify the best person for the job. One of the issues has been the subjective nature of assessing "personal suitability criteria". Policy also encourages managers to take into consideration "qualifications for future needs." There is a need for rigorous methods of applying these two criteria in order to ensure objective results.

Policy statements indicate that "cut-off scores can be expressed in either a numeric or a narrative form", and that "when judged appropriate, higher cut-off scores may be specified (ibid: 20,21)". This policy is too vague and leaves too much room for subjective decisions and discretion which according to focus group participants have a negative effect on visible minority groups.

3.6 Selection boards

On pages 20- 21 of the Staffing Module on Selection, it reads: "A selection board may change the methods of assessment used... This may be done whether or not the manager of the position... has ... authority. The selection board cannot alter the qualifications. Only the Manager of the position may do so... When a candidate is found unqualified with respect to one factor (such as personal suitability), the assessment of remaining factors is not mandatory." These practices may need to be looked at closely to eliminate the potential for adverse impact on visible minorities and to make more transparent the criteria against which a person was assessed.

On the positive side, managers are told that:

- assessment criteria are to be described in behavioral... terms...
- the assessment tools should be "job related";
- in the preparation of the rating guide, the work description, the statement of qualifications and the rating guide must all "fit together".

These are standards which meet the test of employment equity and consistency should be sought for all competitions.

3.7 Testing

The review of testing is beyond the scope of this report. However, focus group participants have indicated problems in terms of cultural differences and bilingual capability issues and their adverse effect on visible minorities. When interviewed, a PSC representative indicated that tests were validated for job relatedness but not specifically for their potential adverse effect on visible minorities. The validity studies relied on the manager's identification of the "essential duties of the position" rather than on empirical methodologies. This was done as managers were deemed to be in the best position to make such an assessment. All test results should be tracked for their adverse effect on visible minorities and rendered free of cultural/racial bias, as appropriate.

3.8 Reporting and monitoring

The Report on Staffing Transaction (ROST) is used to evaluate the use of delegated staffing authority, to monitor staffing activity within the public service and to prepare reports. It would seem an ideal monitoring mechanism which could be used for purposes of employment equity, but the "PSC continues to be concerned about the quality of staffing data (Minutes of Consultative Committee of Chiefs of Staffing, 1995)."

3.9 Acting appointments and deployments

Policy dictates that "employees can be chosen for acting situations with or without a competition" and "if a competition is held, departmental area of selection guidelines need not apply. (Public Service Commission, 1994:4-7)" Acting appointments have been identified by focus group participants as a key instrument for access to promotional opportunities, providing employees with the experience often needed to qualify for promotions. Employees have also voiced the opinion that these appointments are given to a select few on a preferential basis. Since these appointments are not subject to the competitive process and bypass certain guidelines, it would be important to track these appointments to ensure that in fact these practices are not having a negative impact on visible minorities.

Two other methods of appointing employees without competition include the appointment of term employees to indeterminate positions and deployments, which are often used to give employees additional experience or job enrichment.

If a manager is of the opinion that it would not be in the best interest of the public service to hold a competition and is satisfied that the appointee is the best qualified, the manager may appoint a term employee indeterminately (ibid:4-8).

According to the policy statement, "deployments are not appointments made by or under the authority of the PSC and are not subject to the same procedural requirements.

Both these policies have potential for adverse effect on visible minorities and should be examined accordingly.

3.10 Staffing of EX positions

In the minutes of meetings of the Consultative Committee of Chiefs of Staffing dated March 16, 1995, under the heading, "Changes in Staffing EX positions", it is indicated: "Staffing for entry to the EX Group will always be done following a notice, and these competitions will normally be open to all employees under PSC jurisdiction...." Since the number of visible minority executives is so small, there is no critical mass and less likelihood of them getting into the more senior EX levels. For such levels, postering will continue to be encouraged and competitions will normally be open to all EX's regardless of level. However, the new area of selection policy is flexible enough to allow tailoring based on job requirements and candidate availability.

Here, several issues are of concern. Focus group participants have indicated that information regarding these employment opportunities is not being made available to visible minorities. Also, while the general policy encourages a broad base of recruitment, it has loopholes that enable managers to do virtually what they want.

3.11 Downsizing and designation of surplus employees

Policies relating to downsizing indicate that the "merit principle is the basis for deciding which of the affected employees is to be declared surplus (ibid:3-10)". Related guidelines state that reverse order of merit decisions are used to declare employees surplus"(Salmond and Warrent, 1995: ii). Findings from questionnaires and interviews have indicated that some managers are using the reverse order of merit while others are not. Some managers feel that the process only creates further chaos in their departments, leading to a hostile environment. They feel that there are better ways to deal with downsizing such as voluntary termination and attrition. While most visible minority employees at focus groups were confident that the use of reverse order of merit would not affect them adversely, it might be appropriate to examine the methods for downsizing to assess the ones which are having the least negative effect on the under-represented groups such as visible minorities.

3.12 Employment Equity

Reference to employment equity is made in all staffing documents. For instance, in Chapter 5 of the Staffing Manual, it is stated that "External recruitment may be justified... to promote employment equity." Again in the same Chapter, it is stated: "The PSC actively recruits members

of under-represented groups". Despite this, senior managers interviewed and focus group participants stress that such clauses are not used to the advantage of visible minorities.

3.13 Harassment policy and accommodation

Employees have indicated that these policies have had a positive impact on the environment. However, they have also indicated that they are not implemented in a consistent manner and visible minorities fear using the complaint process for fear of retaliation. Managers are not trained consistently in those areas nor are they made accountable for the results. Some participants felt that the "zero tolerance" harassment policy is not being implemented.

3.14 Areas for action

Any written policy can be criticized and improved upon and, therefore, the staffing policies of the PSC are no exception. However, the main concern in this context must remain at the implementation level. Participants in the study have suggested that a central issue is a lack of management will to enact change which would ensure that visible minority employees are fairly represented in the public service at all levels. Real commitment produces real change. In the absence of commitment, no tangible, consistent results can be expected.

What appears to be needed is the right combination of flexibility and accountability. Policies related to recruitment, staffing and promotion must be flexible enough to allow managers to give qualified visible minority candidates access to positions; while at the same time ensuring that the system remains accountable and transparent. While this is no easy task, it would be worthwhile to review policies with this in mind.

We list below some areas that warrant action:

- There may be a need to clarify and tighten up some policies that are currently too vague: for example, where it is indicated that some exemption may be "in the best interest of the public service".

- There is a need to ensure that mechanisms are in place to enlarge the recruitment base and make acting assignments and developmental opportunities accessible to visible minorities.

- Establishing a tracking system with regard to all areas of recruitment, selection and promotion would be highly desirable at this time. It would ensure that the public service can identify with more precision areas of concern for visible minorities and keep on top of the situation as it changes. In particular, discretionary powers should be monitored to ensure that any adverse effect is captured quickly at all levels of the staffing process.

- Employment equity as well as policies relating to racial harassment need to be acted upon, monitored for results and attached to an accountability mechanism. Training of personnel, particularly managers responsible for staffing, is required to ensure that they are aware of how to use employment equity provisions effectively and fairly.

- Finally, the government needs to make clear to all employees that it will take the steps required to assure a representative work force for visible minorities at all levels of the organization. The will for this initiative must exist at the highest levels, and managers should know that they will be held accountable for the effective implementation of employment equity policies.

Summary: Chapter 3: Hiring Policies and Practices

The purpose of this chapter is to review public service employment systems and their potential impact on hiring and promotion of visible minorities.

- Public service employment systems are complex, often rigid, and insufficiently transparent to demonstrate equitable treatment.

- More flexibility for managers could improve opportunity for members of visible minorities, but there must also be clear accountability for results.

- Employment systems - in particular, job requirements and candidate assessment processes - need to be clear, fair and as objective as possible. Areas of selection and eligibility requirements should be broad enough to encourage a range of applicants.

- Information on employment opportunities should be widely disseminated so all interested candidates can apply.

- Managers should use creative ways to reach out to members of visible minorities, and track results.

- All efforts should reinforce the merit principle so there is no impression that unqualified candidates are being hired.

CHAPTER FOUR

Employee Perspectives

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the perspectives of both visible minority and control group employees gained through questionnaires and focus group discussions.

4.2 Environmental scan

When asked to offer their explanation of the gap between the availability of visible minorities in the Canadian workforce and the visible minority representation in the federal public service, participants in the focus groups, as well as those providing written comments, offered a sort of "environmental scan" of possible determining factors. We summarize below a number of perspectives of a general or contextual nature.

Visible minority public servants as agents of change

Participants felt the need for the government to "factor in change" to its operations. Several participants pointed to the strategic advantage of seeing visible minority public servants as part of the solution to the "crisis" facing the public service: the opportunity to enhance the diversity of experience and perspectives that could be brought to bear on policy formulation and program execution in Canada. The point emphasized is that "the world is in Canada". Public servants can, therefore, serve the citizens of diverse backgrounds better, by drawing on this rich array of talent and experience available in the service of the state.

Cynicism

Perhaps one of the strongest currents that ran through the comments of the visible minority participants in the study was that of cynicism regarding the employment equity program. The perception is that a large number of studies has been done on visible minorities and plans announced but almost no progress has been made in the 12 years since *Equality Now!* and the Abella Commission report, *Equality in Employment*.

Linked with this, as a sort of sub-theme, is the element of perceived tokenism. It is claimed, as one participant phrased it, that "tokenism is the worst form of racism." The impression is that departments and agencies typically focus only on aggregate numbers and often establish targets using the minimum as the maximum. In other words, the floor becomes the ceiling.

Commitment at the top is considered by participants to be critical. There is also a perception among the visible minority employees involved in the study that there is a lack of vision on the part of administrators who fear change and lack the will to change. Then, too, federal managers are said to be ill-equipped to defend the employment equity program.

There was also an indication that visible minorities outside the public service have little incentive to join as a result of the "the horror stories" from visible minority employees already in the service. This may be related to "culturally-shaped" choices of some visible minority communities in which, because of traditional orientations or the bad experience of elders, there exists a general antipathy to government and preference for the free professions or commerce. There was also a consensus that the relatively low salaries of the public service compared to those of the private sector, notably in fields like computer programming, is an important factor in the hiring equation.

The impact of downsizing

There was a clear recognition of the impact of downsizing. Participants seemed well aware of the implications for the employment equity program of the current freeze in the hiring of indeterminate employees and the loss of long-term security in the public service. And the fact that much of the recruitment which is occurring is at the clerical level was pinpointed by participants in the focus groups as a disincentive for the brightest and best of visible minority university graduates.

Image and climate

The general image of the federal public service was another factor highlighted by participants in the focus groups. There was a sense of decline in the already low prestige of public service jobs caused in great measure by "public service bashing" on the part of politicians and the media.

There were also references to the climate that is perceived to exist regarding visible minorities in the federal public service. It is felt that the corporate culture does not foster an equity program designed for them and that it is doubtful whether there is commitment at the top. Indeed, visible minority participants raised questions and expressed scepticism as to whether the present study would result in anything worthwhile.

4.3 Access to job information

The perception of most participants is of a near absence of accessible official information about jobs for which candidates from outside the federal public service can apply. The social or friendship network is seen to be the main effective source of information, and potential visible minority candidates tend to be excluded from this network. This view is supported by the evidence from the questionnaires that, in comparison with control group participants, a higher percentage of visible minority participants received job information through advertisements. The control

group had a higher percentage who accessed job information through word of mouth -- an indicator of the impact of kinship and friendship networks. In short, information on jobs appears to be less available or accessible to potential visible minority candidates, particularly since there is little or no advertising in the media for positions to be filled.

4.4 Lack of accountability

A large proportion of visible minority participants believe that only "lip service" is paid to the employment equity program, and "we do not witness positive results." Employment equity is talked about but not enforced: "What we have here is just smoke." As a result, these observers state that the employment equity program should be monitored by an outside body -- an independent body that reports to Parliament*. There is a widespread feeling that a strict regime of accountability must be established in order to ensure active and timely implementation of the policy.

4.5 Labour market supply

The focus group participants identified a number of factors that affect the supply side of the labour market regarding visible minorities and their participation in the public service. Among them are:

- the nature of public service work, which certain groups may view as insufficiently challenging;
- competition from the private sector which has realized the value of skills possessed by visible minorities;
- the fact that some visible minorities seek work in very specialized fields and are concentrated in certain occupations -- a fact that affects the composition of the available workforce;
- the influence of "culture-based" interest and training in certain occupations (e.g. the free professions) and not in others among certain visible minority groups;
- the perceived absence of consistent statements (e.g. in advertisements) that the federal government is an employment equity employer; and
- the fact that for some departments, most of the jobs are in locations with small visible minority populations.

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* The new federal Employment Equity Act, which came into force in October, 1996, includes the federal public service as well as the federally-regulated private sector. It gives the Canadian Human Rights Commission the authority to enforce the Act by means of compliance audits.

4.6 Recruitment

The participants brought out a number of issues that are relevant to recruitment itself. Among them were:

- the absence of a clear, public commitment to employment equity for visible minorities (in contrast to the Memorandum of Understanding that has been drawn up regarding Aboriginal Peoples);
- poor recruitment strategies, i.e. limited university recruiting and very little use of the Internet to announce vacancies/competitions;
- an almost exclusive focus on term appointments;
- limited and selective impact of the "word of mouth" information system;
- "mirror image" recruitment by managers -- searching for people like themselves who "they can trust" and the alleged practice of changing the required qualifications to suit particular candidates;
- the lack of cross-cultural education of hiring officers;
- the problem of equivalencies of foreign credentials and an over-emphasis on credentialism; and
- alleged fake or rigged competitions.

We were told by a large segment of all public service employees that there is a perception of nepotism and bureaucratic patronage -- creating an environment in which visible minorities, who have not traditionally been "in the loop," find it more difficult to compete.

The lack of cross-cultural education among officers has its effect, participants argued, not in the hiring process itself, but rather in the barriers caused by the negative attitudes towards visible minority applicants harboured by those doing the hiring. The problem of equivalencies flows from the undervaluing of foreign credentials and experience. There is, also, a rigid attitude on the part of those hiring against educational requirements that do not "follow the orthodox path", as one participant put it: that is, reading for degrees or diplomas rather than taking a series of courses that do not necessarily lead to such certification.

Other factors mentioned by some focus group members were:

- the management style of senior public service managers who do not place importance on employment equity;

- the barriers created by organizational culture like the fear that since resources are scarce, managers cannot take a chance on visible minority candidates;
- management's lack of awareness of the special measures program;
- a need for more flexibility in hiring, and
- the negative effect of official languages policies at higher levels since access to language training is limited.

4.7 Hiring

A number of comments were made regarding the hiring process proper, especially related to the relationship between those who hire and those who are hired. The proposition advanced by a number of participants is that since those who are hiring are looking for like-minded individuals -- the alleged "mirror image" recruitment referred to above -- and since few visible minorities are involved in the hiring process, their chances of being hired are minimal.

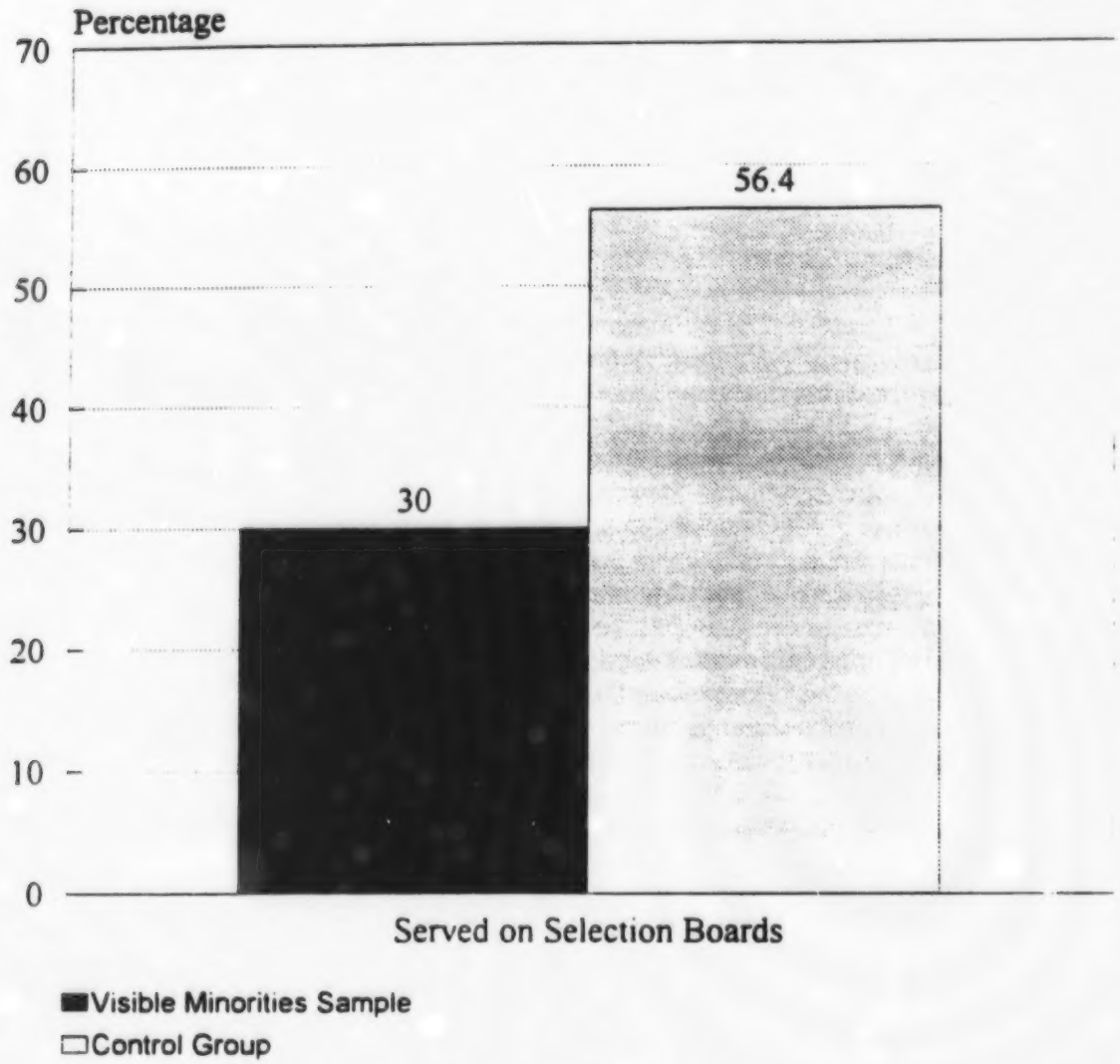
In recalling their job interviews, the percentage of visible minority participants who said that they were asked questions unrelated to the position for which they were competing was twice the percentage of control group participants with similar recollections. It was also stated that the competitive process in the federal public service is foreign to many visible minorities. There appears to be a lack of understanding of the process and of the language of the job descriptions. Participants argued that, generally, visible minority candidates do well in the examination but have a hard time in the rest of the process, especially in meeting "personal suitability" requirements, which are perceived as key determinant. A major deterrent to greater hiring of visible minority applicants is said to be a fear on the part of departments and agencies of a possible backlash if hiring of visible minorities is actively promoted.

4.8 Composition of selection boards

The composition of selection boards was also discussed by employees who participated in the study. The proportion of visible minority participants who had served on a selection board was only about half the proportion of control group participants with comparable experience (see Chart 2). Several visible minority participants observed that:

- the composition of those boards does not reflect the diversity of the workforce and the boards consequently lack the "cultural education" which would enable them to understand the background, the silent language (including the body language) of immigrant and visible minority candidates;

Chart 2: Participation on Selection Boards: Comparison Between the Reported Experience of Visible Minorities in the Sample and Control Group



Source: John Samuel & Associatess Inc.

- the boards are often manipulated by "remote control" by senior managers or board chairs have the results overturned or the competition annulled if things do not turn out as planned.

In short, most competitions were seen by visible minority participants as a "fake" or a "fraud" since the candidates were thought to have been pre-selected. In addition, it was noted that since there are few visible minority managers, they are seldom members of hiring boards.

4.9 Screening

The vast majority of visible minority participants seemed to think that foreign-earned qualifications and experience were undervalued. We were also told by some visible minority participants that one's name can be a factor; they found it helpful to change their "foreign sounding" names in order to get at least an interview call. It was also asserted that accent is used as a pretext of screening out visible minority candidates under the rubric of "effective interpersonal communication."

4.10 Selection

We received comments on aspects of the machinery used and the procedures adopted in selection that are deemed to be prejudicial to the hiring of visible minorities.

The role of kinship and friendship

We were told that "old boys" and "new girls" networks (from which visible minorities are mostly excluded) are the real avenues of access since informal "chat chat" and social interaction are often determining factors in interviews and that nepotism is rampant (e.g. there is hiring of spouses, partners and siblings).

It was also noted that some hiring is done through outside personnel agencies that rarely recruit minorities.

Specifications and tests

Participants spoke of a rising curve of complicated requirements for relatively simple jobs; some pointed to a perceived accompanying paradox: "the higher the post the less specific the requirement". In short, the non-visible minority candidates seem to face less demanding criteria for better-paying and more interesting jobs.

It is alleged by many visible minority participants that entry level tests are often culturally-biased. It was said that supposedly objective tests (e.g., in-basket tests) are open to very subjective interpretation of answers that tend to reflect an Anglo-Celtic way of doing things. Questions were raised about the appropriateness of the role-playing used in "behaviour interviews": it was

sometimes described as aggressive and inappropriate. More generally, there were complaints about inappropriate tests being administered to clerical and other staff that, in the words of one senior and well-experienced manager, result in "persons highly praised for their competence in doing their jobs failing them." The criticism voiced was that these and other tests are too generic: that is, too largely based on general knowledge rather than knowledge specific to the jobs in question. The feeling, in the words of one participant, was that the "general competency test is problematic - some people are scored wrong."

An operational point regarding equivalencies was flagged: the assessment of the equivalence of qualifications earned abroad takes too long and many of those involved in the assessment process do not know how to evaluate them.

4.11 Personal suitability

Possibly the single aspect of hiring most often cited as an issue by visible minority participants was "personal suitability". This criterion can be one of the determining factors in competitions, and is perceived to be purely subjective. The elements include considerations that reflect the "personal chemistry" between the manager and a pre-selected candidate who is then given an automatic edge. Some focus group participants reported that a few visible minority candidates for internal competitions were being told that they lost those competitions by one point based on personal suitability.

4.12 Workplace environment

Visible minority participants and those from the control group had slightly divergent views on working conditions in the federal public service. Of those responding to our questionnaires, both groups agreed by a two-thirds majority that working conditions in the public service are not conducive to a higher level of production or achievement. However, twice as many visible minority participants as members of the control group felt that the working conditions discriminate against or create obstacles for visible minority employees.

Particularly noteworthy about the visible minority employee perspectives was the spontaneous mention of a negative climate, and the eagerness with which participants wanted to deal with this factor. We also received many written comments on this topic from visible minority respondents to the questionnaires.

With respect to arrangements for fair and equitable treatment of visible minority employees, one of the most revealing remarks made during the focus group discussions was a query made only partly in jest when the matter of a regime for the fair and equitable treatment of visible minority employees was broached: "Is this the comedy section?"

The overall conclusion among participants was that if there had been fair and equitable treatment for visible minority employees there would be no need for special measures. In fact, several

examples were cited of mistreatment or harassment, both subtle and less so. The machinery for handling complaints in the public service was considered by participants to be ineffective.

Three out of five visible minority employees and half of the control group, as seen in Annex 2, believe that employment equity and human rights policies enhance the quality of the workplace. As far as the overall atmosphere is concerned, the view was expressed by some visible minority respondents that there is a lack of communication in general on employment equity and that resistance to accommodating visible minority employees is common. According to one observer, management seems warm and open in a private setting, but visible minorities are ignored in the public setting: "hot and cold treatment", as the person phrased it. In this person's view, there is a lot of stereotyping, leading to a misunderstanding of visible minorities. This summarizes many comments we got from different quarters.

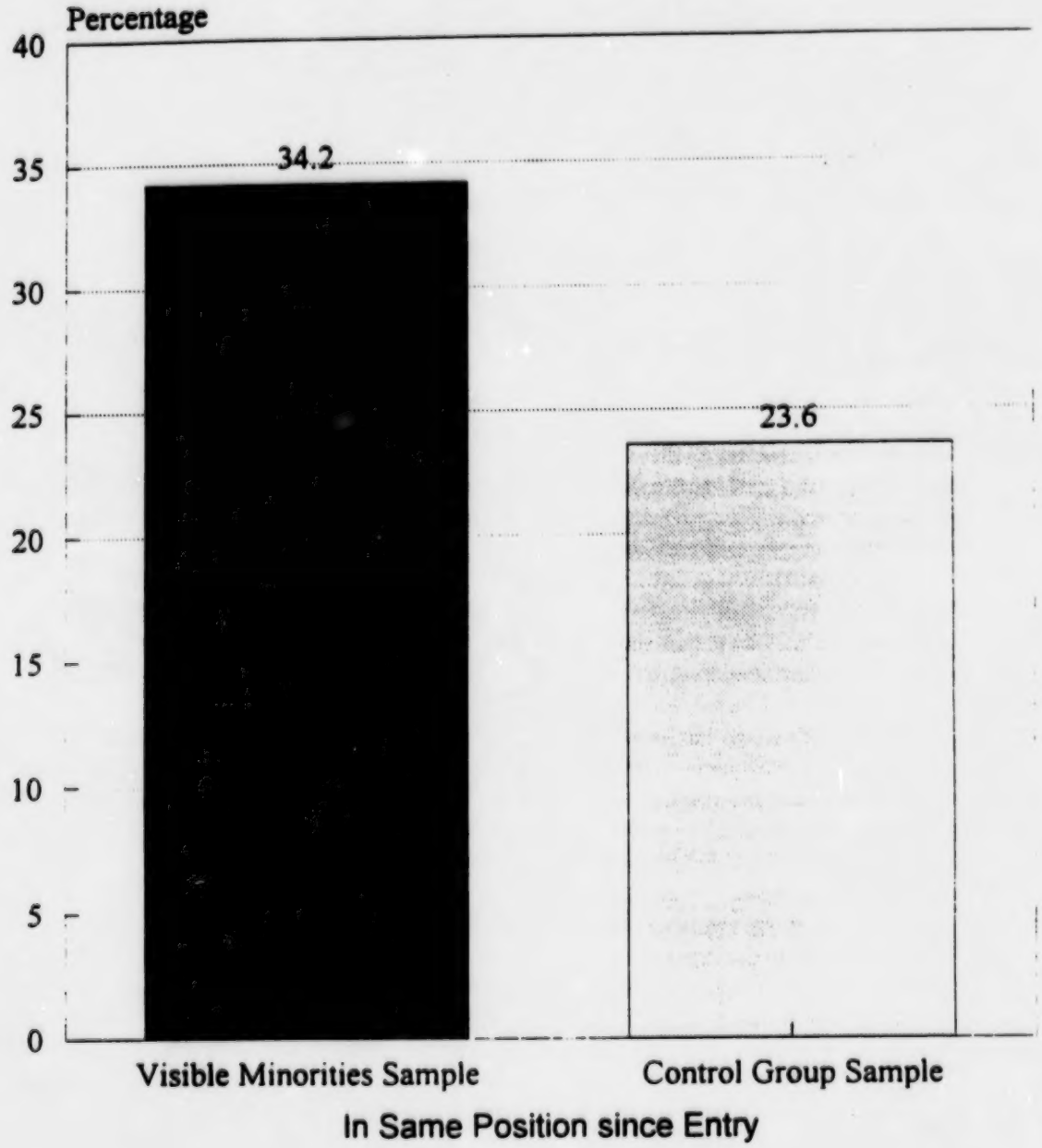
4.13 Promotion

Chart 3 shows what proportion of visible minority employees were in the same position since entry compared to the control group. More than a third of the former were in the same position as when they were hired, while less than a quarter of the latter were. It needs to be mentioned here that visible minority employees were in the public service for a somewhat shorter duration, but not short enough, it would seem, to explain the full difference. Chart 4 shows that more than twice the percentage of control group participants had received three or more promotions in the last seven years compared to the visible minority participants. During the same period, a higher percentage of the control group had lateral moves or assignments and if they did not, it was most often by choice. The same is true of acting positions at a higher level; more than three quarters of the control group had such opportunities compared to less than three out of five for visible minorities, as seen in Chart 5. In both groups roughly the same number had applied for competitions in the last seven years.

The share of promotional opportunities seemed to be the subject uppermost in the minds of almost all visible minority participants in the group discussions. The consensus was that visible minority employees hit a "glass ceiling" by mid-career, some much earlier. There were several testimonies of one or two promotions over twenty years, even where initial appointments were at low levels given the incumbents' qualifications.

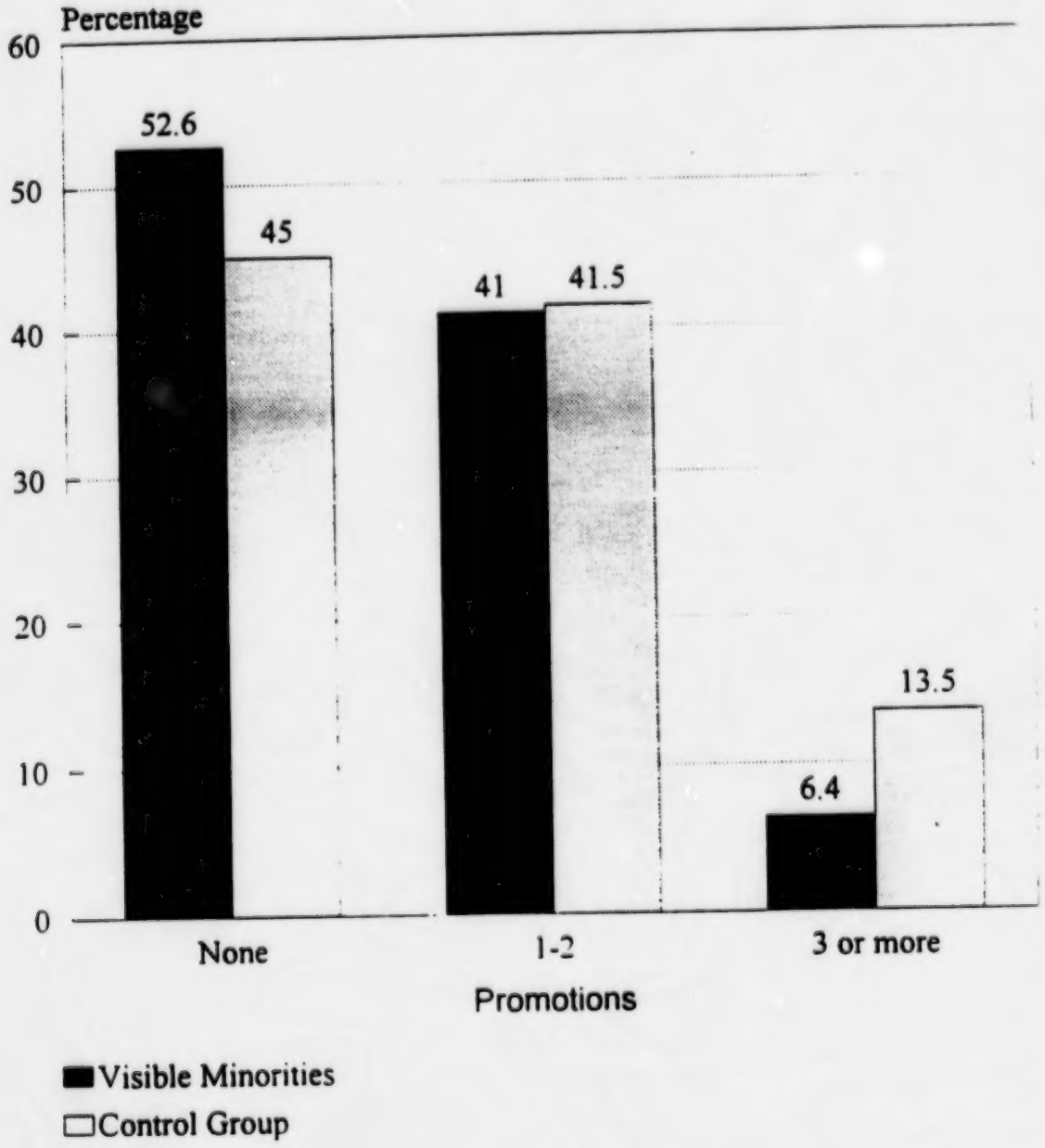
Nearly half of the visible minority participants and one-fifth of the control group participants answering the questionnaire could identify policies and/or practices in the promotion process that discouraged visible minority employees. The factors most often mentioned both on questionnaires and in discussions were the "buddy system" or the impact of ties of friendship and kinship. It is said that the informal system is the operative one: "If you don't mingle you are out of it." In this regard, it is perhaps instructive that three quarters of both groups answering the questionnaires felt that the best qualified candidates do not receive promotions.

Chart 3: Relative Proportions of Visible Minorities and Control Group Who Are in the Same Position of Entry to the Public Service



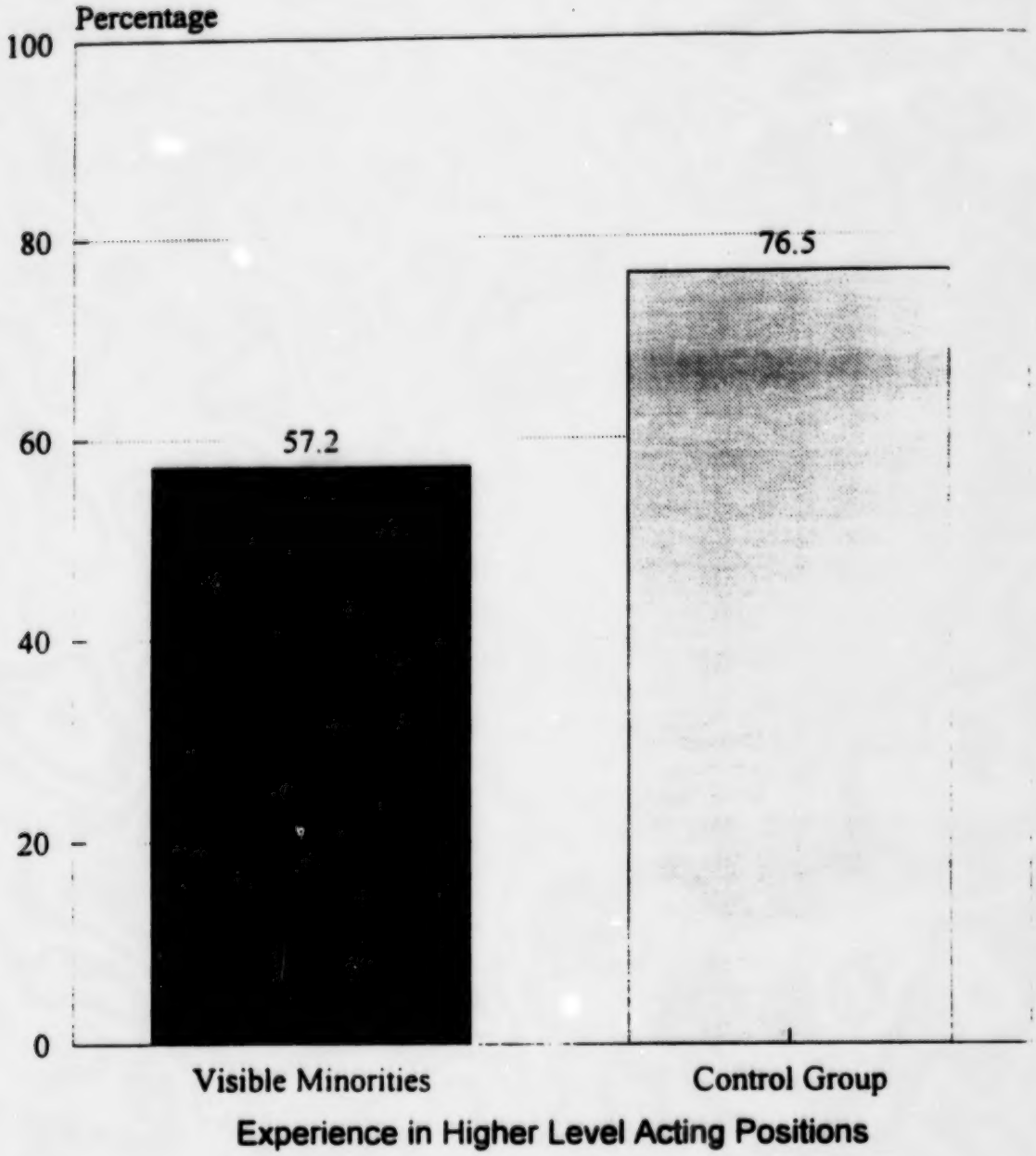
Source: John Samuel & Associates Inc.

Chart 4 : Comparative Numbers of Promotions for Visible Minorities and Control Group in the Sample During the Last 7 Years



Source: John Samuel & Associates Inc.

Chart 5: Comparative Numbers of Visible Minorities in the Sample and Control Groups Who Have Acted in Higher Level Positions



Source: John Samuel & Associates Inc.

The view was also put forward that regionalisation of competitions is a "set-up" to limit or exclude those who are outside a given region. The impact of acting appointments was also stressed. They are said to give an edge to incumbents in competitions for those jobs. As mentioned above, responses to the questionnaires indicate more members of the control group than visible minority respondents have had acting appointments. Many visible minority participants in the focus groups stated that visible minority employees do not get these assignments. One asked: "If you cannot get the acting assignment, how are you going to get the appointment?"

Another factor indicated is the practice of making appointments without competition and posting notices after the event. When there are competitions, there is, in the opinion of a large proportion of participants in the focus groups, too much emphasis on the interview rather than on the candidate's work record. Twice the proportion of visible minority participants as control group participants felt that interview questions were not related to the position.There is a feeling on the part of virtually all visible minority employees who participated in the study that they must work considerably harder -- estimates range from twice to ten times harder -- in order to gain recognition and to be considered worthy of promotions. The perception is that this affects acting appointments since their non-visible minority counterparts who are "number two in actual merit" seem "to get the breaks".

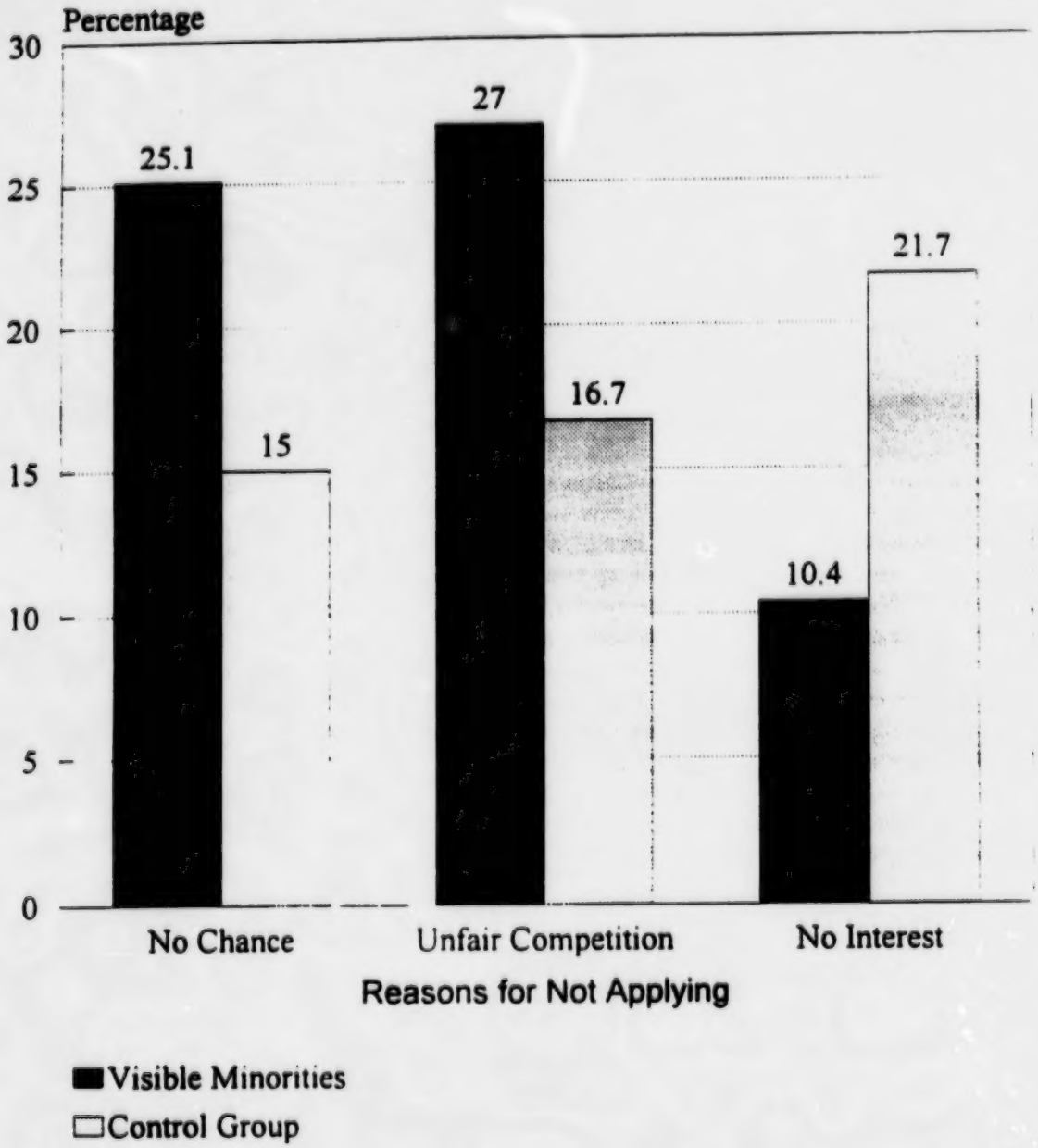
Some participants mentioned what might be called self-exclusion. The suggestion is that some visible minority potential candidates for promotion get discouraged because they are not regarded by others as competent and take themselves out of the competition process. Questionnaire results reveal that a higher proportion of visible minority participants than control group participants refrained from applying for promotion competitions because they thought the competition process was unfair and they had no chance of winning (as seen in Chart 6). It was put bluntly in one focus group: "visible minorities are afraid to try for promotions, so they do not bother."

The sense of being excluded by others was reported by several participants. The assertion was that one can feel that one is "not wanted in the clique." Others said that "you need to play bridge, hockey and belong to the Rotary Club" to get along. It was suggested that this type of social interaction off the job helps other employees acquire the credentials for promotion: "You need experience at a higher level to access high level positions. But acting positions are given to buddies. People take care of themselves first."

A number of other obstacles to upward mobility of visible minority employees were cited in the focus groups in particular. Managers were often said to assign visible minority staff to do innovative or "clean-up" jobs temporarily but never appoint them to these positions on an indeterminate basis despite very positive appraisals. Some participants claimed that managers in particular departments effectively "punish" visible minority staff for their productivity, keeping them at low levels, with the rationale that they are efficient and therefore indispensable.

How promotion competitions are lost is said to be sometimes perplexing to visible minority candidates. One often repeated source of puzzlement, mentioned earlier, has been the loss of

Chart 6: Reasons For Not Applying For Promotions - Comparison of Responses From Visible Minorities and Control Group



Source: John Samuel & Associates Inc.

competitions by one point on the grounds of personal suitability - a fact mentioned by several participants in focus groups. Other occurrences strike many participants as constituting "subtle but definite discrimination." These include the cancellation of boards -- with no right of appeal; the refusal "to extend the life" of eligibility lists; and the dissolution of boards where management does not get the candidates it wants. Participants argued that the successful candidates are frequently those that have been hand-picked by senior management. The ultimate irony, some participants said, is that visible minority staff are often asked to train (non-visible minority) winners of competitions in which they were judged the losers.

The perceived psychological climate in which visible minority aspirations are allegedly being thwarted was described by one person as follows: "If I am competing with a white person, I have to be exceptional to be qualified...White people do not want visible minorities to do too much." In that person's judgment no one takes the time to understand, so the visible minority employees are stuck in their jobs.

4.14 Visible minorities in the management category

An issue of particular concern to participants was access to the management or executive category by visible minority employees. Both visible minority and control group participants were articulate in their diagnosis of barriers against such access.

These barriers are said to include:

- the need to be a "whole" or "real" Canadian person;
- the need to be bilingual;
- the suggestion that colleagues are not yet ready to accept visible minorities in the category;
- management's lack of commitment despite the rhetoric;
- the myth that the visible minority employees are not well trained;
- the failure on the part of senior management to recognize the education and training of visible minority employees;
- the decline in the availability of management positions as a result of downsizing; and
- the suggestion that merit is not the first consideration.

In a more general sense, the following additional factors were identified: a lack of information regarding available programs and developmental opportunities; the alleged lack of networking skills on the part of the visible minority aspirants; an absence of information on processes; lack

of visible minority role models; lack of acceptance by management and employees once appointed; communication difficulties, particularly among foreign-born visible minorities; possible "racist attitudes" of older executives who have not worked with visible minorities; the definition of "managers" and "leaders"; and the perceived absence of employee knowledge of the staffing process.

Perhaps the perceived plight of visible minority aspirants for middle and senior management positions was best put by an unsuccessful candidate for a senior position who, noting the absence of a visible minority professional in the management cadre of the occupational group, observed: "I may not be good, but is no one?"

The thread running through our discussions was that there is no accountability in the system for the conduct of boards that have "variable" practices, mostly inimical to the prospects for promotion of visible minority public servants.

4.15 Comfort in the environment of the workplace

The visible minority participants in the study were less comfortable in the workplace than members of the control group. This state of unease was attributed to a number of factors.

Some of these relate to perceptions about "entitlement": the implication that when a visible minority person secures a job in the federal public service it is seen as a favour offered by the white "establishment", not a right of citizenship or an achievement based on merit. Participants also suggested that there exists a fear at the political and managerial levels that one day visible minorities will hold too much power ("I may be supervised by a visible minority person".) However, the problem is said to be primarily with the older generation; the younger generation of public service managers is considered to be more receptive to change.

Another group of factors could be dubbed "psychological." They include the feeling, cited by visible minority participants, of being "beaten down", of hitting "walls" as distinct from merely going through hoops and, for some, of lacking psychological support. One participant noted that this lack of support, due in part to the absence of a critical mass of visible minority employees, results in certain issues and incidents being ignored or swept aside. Without the numbers, there is a hesitation to approach certain sensitive issues.

Some attitudinal factors that were mentioned relate to the concept and implementation of the employment equity program: the feeling on the part of some visible minority employees that the term visible minorities "has a negative connotation... there is a hurdle in that alone"; a negative perception of targets by visible minorities themselves and others; the fear in departments and agencies of backlash; a perception on the part of visible minority employees that only "lip service" is paid to the employment equity program; the growing perception that visible minority candidates who win competitions, especially promotional ones, only do so because they belong to a designated group; and the absence of an organizational climate that would allow visible minorities to take their proper place.

Other factors include perceived cultural differences. According to the majority of visible minority participants, assertiveness, when it comes to them, is seen as "aggressiveness". They also allege differential treatment of complainants; "if one complains one is seen as a trouble-maker"; if there is a complaint against you it is flagged but if it is against a non-visible minority colleague it is said that the person made "an error".

Participants spoke in general terms of the presence of prejudice and racial discrimination in the organizational culture and a "laissez-faire" attitude when it comes to the application of anti-discrimination policies, noting that managers do not receive adequate training in the field.

At the more technical level, many visible minority participants noted the under-valuing of their knowledge: the failure to recognize them by either praise or pay for the foreign language skills they employ in their work beyond those officially required in job specifications; the ghettoisation of visible minority employees because they do not fit an organizational culture that is based on career planning and the "image" of the corporate culture; and the lack of developmental positions and mentors.

The feeling of discomfort was also attributed by visible minority participants to: past discrimination on the basis of race; the very hierarchical nature of the service -- where even in small departments and agencies there exists a sort of "folie de grandeur"; the isolation of visible minority employees spread out at lower levels with no leaders; the annoyance of well-educated persons caught in lower level jobs finding themselves supervised by "grade 10 dropouts" in need of a "cultural education" and the sense of frustration and disappointment about promotional prospects that led one person contemplating departure to say "I would rather go home and bake cookies than stay in a brain-dead job."

Sadly, very few visible minority employees who participated in the study seemed inclined to recommend a career in the public service to young people of their acquaintance.

Summary: Chapter 4
Employee Perspectives

This chapter summarizes the perspectives of both visible minority and control group employees who participated in the study. The information was obtained through questionnaires and focus group discussions.

- Visible minority employees believe that diversity is still not accepted by management as beneficial to the public service, and that genuine commitment is lacking. Participants were skeptical about achieving real equity.

- The public service climate is perceived as unresponsive and even hostile to visible minority candidates and employees. Participants detected a profound resistance to change and a tendency to keep visible minority employees in subordinate positions.

- Hiring and promotion processes were seen, in many cases, as being manipulated to favour those who were part of the right networks.

- The main factors cited as barriers to equitable hiring and promotion were:

    - culturally-biased selection processes;
    - language requirements;
    - the emphasis on subjective assessments of "personal suitability"; and
    - denigration of foreign credentials;

- There was also some feeling that visible minority members are discouraged from entering the public service as a result of cultural preferences with respect to employment choices, and negative feedback from community members already employed in the public service. The general demoralization and lack of opportunity within a downsizing environment were also mentioned.

Continued on next page

Chapter 4 summary, continued

- Visible minority participants have had proportionally fewer promotional opportunities and acting appointments and have participated less often on selection boards than their counterparts in the control group. Access to management has been especially limited.

- Many visible minority participants felt held back by prejudice and any efforts to be assertive or complain about mistreatment only worsened the situation. As a result, they are discouraged and disinclined to compete for new openings or recommend a public service career to young people.

- Visible minority participants look for more substantive action, including cross-cultural sensitization, the establishment of mechanisms to ensure fairness and diversity, and greater representation of visible minority employees in selection processes.

CHAPTER FIVE

Management Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

Management perspectives were obtained from three sources: a questionnaire sent to executives (EXs) of the public service and the staffing/managing group (lower than the EXs in the public service hierarchy); interviews with several EXs; and focus groups of the staffing/managing group. As in the case of the visible minority employees and control group participants, managers who participated in the study were generous in the time they devoted not only to sharing their perspectives but also to making suggestions for improving visible minority representation.

The following observations are significant for an appreciation of how things look from the "other side", so to speak. This also shows the extent to which the views and suggestions seem to converge with those of the visible minority participants on major points.

5.2 Environmental scan

The hiring/managing group who responded to the questionnaire were able to identify a large number of factors that affect the general environment in which the hiring of visible minority candidates into the public service takes place.

In identifying the factors that might account for the low proportion of visible minority employees in the public service, the reasons most often cited were differences in the availability of qualified visible minority candidates in various locations and different attitudes towards them in these locations. The culturally-based career preferences of some visible minority communities, a phenomenon beyond the control of the public service, was also identified as a factor. However, 12.5% of the staffing/managing group answering questionnaires and many managers who were interviewed individually or in groups, identified the presence of systemic barriers as a factor affecting the representation of visible minorities in the federal public service.

The managers' wider perspectives covered a number of points related to the general environment in which the hiring/managing occurred. These would include the fact that the power of visible minorities is growing politically as evidenced in the make-up of Parliament; that re-structuring of the public service is a major problem; that some departments and agencies are more sensitive to employment equity than others; and that the profile of visible minorities varies among departments and agencies -- some are high achievers. In that connection, management participants stressed the importance of the commitment and leadership of an organization: "Practice is more important than a well-articulated policy". They also noted the public service's inability to compete with

private sector salaries in some areas such as the computer field. Some pointed to the importance of the merit principle, which they think should be better respected -- which, in turn, would likely contribute to greater representation of visible minority employees. As one manager put it, "the government is paid to provide services to the people and should reflect the people it is paid to provide services for."

Managers seem to have the perception that the only groups for which special measures have been adopted are women and Aboriginal people. They are of the view that visible minority groups have been "whining" but there have not been enough concrete recommendations to act on.

However, it was the attitude towards visible minority employees that managers seem to give the greatest weight. We were told that "racial discrimination" has a lot to do with the lower percentage of visible minority employees in the public service. One manager put it thus: "Canadians have prided themselves in being a non-racist society; [but the truth is that] they are no more or less racist than anyone else, although they compare themselves with Americans and claim to be less racist." In his view, much more needs to be done in order to eliminate racial discrimination -- cultural bias has to be addressed but that is a long term process and a difficult task. This manager asked the question: "Why are there no visible minority Deputy Ministers? There is no easy answer; but I would not rule out prejudice".

Other participants observed that barriers arise between people of different backgrounds, and that it is not human nature to take a long-term view. From this viewpoint, comfort levels, values and a level playing field are important factors. If there is no understanding, there is fear.

There was a feeling that there is a need to educate federal public servants about the value that immigrants bring to Canadian society: we need immigrants, it was argued, for economic reasons and there should be no employment barriers based on factors such as skin colour.

5.3 Hiring

The primacy of culture, not the official hiring process, seemed to permeate many participating managers' perspectives. They emphasized the cultural biases in hiring; the impact of regional factors or culture in hiring (for example, the difference in Toronto with a large visible minority labour force); the possible limitation of job search by visible minority candidates caused by community influences; the importance of corporate culture and comfort levels.

In the view of management participants, the majority of discriminatory acts are not intentional; they depend on the level of comfort allowed by the system. They note that the techniques used in hiring have cultural variations. In their experience, visible minority candidates do not respond in the same manner in interviews (with respect to eye contact, for example) and interpretation of answers is different. It was observed in passing that the hiring "tools" are not always appropriate for women either.

5.4 Labour market supply

The problem of labour market supply was underscored by hiring/managing staff, with some emphasis on regional factors. The Atlantic provinces were cited as an example of where there are few minorities in a location where one is hiring. This, it was argued, is exacerbated by a frequent unwillingness on the part of candidates who live in or near large metropolitan centres like Toronto to move. Other factors mentioned as affecting supply were: some visible minority members prefer entrepreneurial activities to public service; the attraction of the nature of the work of certain departments for particular ethno-cultural communities; and the fact that it is not as difficult to find visible minority candidates in some of the research disciplines as it is in the business disciplines.

5.5 Recruitment

Participating managers felt the current predominance of term hiring limits opportunities for visible minority group members. In fact, they said only about a quarter of appointments are indeterminate.

In the participants' view, competitions preclude targeting, though it may be required; this approach requires cooperation with the PSC and the Treasury Board Secretariat. Many of the participating managers complained that the present system is bureaucratic and inefficient and that they often run into a "brick wall" with human resources staff, while acknowledging that the solution is for them to "forge an understanding" with the latter. Their self-diagnosis was that "managers should be educated on employment equity goals."

The barriers to a higher rate of recruitment of visible minority groups which management participants identifed were: insufficient external recruitment; very precise and specialized requirements for scientific positions; the limited recruiting methods; language requirements; cultural differences and lack of sensitivity on the part of those involved in staffing.

Other recruitment-related factors mentioned by participating managers deserve mention. Networking plays a central role in securing access to employment opportunities. For example, one senior executive pointed out that if he wishes to hire someone, he goes to a select number of trusted colleagues to ask for recommendations or to seek their opinion on a particular candidate's personality. About a quarter of the hiring/managing group that responded to our questionnaire and most members of the focus groups deemed networking to be important. Then, too, the respondents to the questionnaires listed "other", which was unspecified, as the most important source of information on jobs; newspapers and electronic and broadcast media coming second and third.

Citizenship and official languages were said by some participants to be "only excuses, not barriers" at the hiring level, although bilingualism may be a barrier at higher levels. However, three out of five respondents in the hiring/managing group felt that Canadian citizens should continue to be given employment preference. Accreditation is also seen as a potential barrier. There was the

perception that there is a need for more programs to hire visible minorities at lower levels and then train and equip them to rise.

5.6 Selection

Participating managers made a number of observations on the operation of the selection system:

- The recruitment and staffing process is not monitored; it is left to the human resources division and there is no tracking.
- People do discriminate; also some visible minorities accuse one another of racism
- There is no ready-made formula for success; success depends on the tools available; a level playing field is important; the challenge is how to create one.
- Some departments have policies that differ from those of the PSC.

On the strictly operational side, it was reported that casuals are being hired for the scientific and professional areas as well as the administrative category. Four out of five of the participating hiring/managing staff confirmed that internal competitions take place all or most of the time and that external competitions are rare. This group also indicated that in about one-fifth of the cases, appointments are made without competitions, a point of great concern to visible minority focus group participants.

Over 70% of respondents to the management questionnaire said that they included education and experience equivalencies all, or most, of the time in their statements of qualifications, and three out of ten posted notices about internal competitions either in the branch or throughout their department or agency. Only seven percent did so throughout the public service. (We were told that "area of search" bears a direct relationship with access to opportunity.) Four out of five respondents use the referral services of the PSC to fill vacancies but they use it least for the EX category -- only about one out of ten. Some 27% of them had asked specifically for visible minority referrals all the time. Four out of 10 indicated that they do not like these strategies to recruit members of underrepresented groups. In fact most say they do not target designated groups, including visible minority groups, in recruiting high calibre university and community college graduates through the PSC's Cooperative Education or Summer Employment Programs. The Accelerated Economists Training Program was reportedly seldom used.

The main tools used in assessing candidates were said to be, in order of importance: interviews, written tests, reviews of past experience, reference checks and reviews of past accomplishments. Over 70 per cent of the questionnaire respondents said the gender mix on interview boards was commonly considered, but that visible minority representation was usually not.

There seemed to be a divergence of opinion between the executives and the rest of the staffing/managing group regarding one point: a minority of the latter indicated that they assessed recruitment and selection methods and criteria to ensure that they met the requirement of the positions; the EXs did not agree. However, all respondents said they never established different selection criteria for visible minority candidates. Most respondents indicated that the process *per se* does not have a negative effect on visible minorities.

5.7 Promotion

The management participants shed their own light on the nature of the promotion system and the way it affects visible minority employees. Comments included the observations that: no performance appraisal is objective; that there are barriers in some departments and agencies against visible minority public servants entering the EX category; the level of comfort is important ("playing golf with the boys helps so that the boys will notice you") and that the role of mentors is important.

It was suggested that mentoring and "sponsorship" need to be actively encouraged. The view expressed was that these things happen unofficially and visible minority employees should be encouraged to find mentors from among the "many smart people among visible minorities" who "are noticed."

5.8 Entry into the management category

As in the case of the employees, the matter of entry into the executive realm of the federal public service was the object of special commentary from the management respondents.

The litany heard with regard to visible minorities is: "you are not ready to be a manager". Though this would seem to be a false perception in many cases, it appears to be an entrenched habit of thought. Visible minorities are perceived to lack self- assertiveness. Unless such skill sets are developed, visible minorities will continue to be perceived as "non-managerial" material, the EX participants said. Often, somewhat passive traits are not seen as being "in sync" with North American values.

To get into the EX group one needs a wide range of experiences, not just a professional or other specific background: one must be a good manager and have policy experience. According to management participants, some visible minority professionals would prefer to remain in their field of specialization: this creates a barrier against their entry into the EX category. There seem to be some unarticulated qualms among senior EXs as to whether the visible minority employees would be good managers who understand the needs of the groups under them. Participants pointed out that entering the EX group is a career change and there could be a conflict between commitment to a specific profession and general management.

Management participants also pointed out that the EX group itself is shrinking: many want to reach that level but few are needed.

5.9 Workplace environment

The context for employment equity initiatives that would influence the workplace environment for visible minorities is of interest.

As high as 72% of the managers said that they did not set specific employment equity objectives for individuals under their supervision. Respondents also indicated that few departments or agencies had done anything beyond adopting a self-identification strategy, doing some training and establishing employment equity committees. Only 36% of the executives had asked their managers to keep employment equity objectives in focus in the hiring process and only 10% monitored the recruitment and selection process. And only about a quarter said their employees required training in employment equity and human rights issues.

About 47% of the managers said they did not believe the workplace environment is free of racial harassment: the participants were also divided equally when asked if they had witnessed negative attitudes toward visible minorities or immigrants. While more than half said the special needs of visible minorities are being accommodated, a significant percentage was not so sure. Close to two-thirds said that visible minority employees do not initiate more complaints than other employees.

Unlike the employees, a high proportion of the participating managers, about 85%, said they felt comfortable in the workplace environment.

5.10 Best practices

Our interviews, focus groups and a review of statistical material show that some departments have done much better than others in the recruitment of visible minority employees. It would be worthwhile to discover why this happens to be so.

A number of the managers told us about the "good practices" of some departments. These include:

- strict disciplinary action in cases of harassment;
- establishment of a Racial Harmony Committee, to provide feedback and to make helpful suggestions to management;
- training in human rights and employment equity for both employees and managers;
- appointment of an ombudsperson;

- having well-trained recruiters and organizing training and development sessions: and
- a formal anti-harassment policy that is well articulated.

Summary: Chapter 5: Management Perspectives

This chapter outlines the perspectives of public service managers regarding the situation of visible minority employees and applicants. These perspectives were obtained through questionnaires sent to EXs and members of the staffing/managing group as well as focus groups and interviews.

- Managers and executives confirmed that a firm commitment to equity and diversity is not always present. They agree with employees that rigid employment systems make it difficult to reach out to visible minority candidates, and that networks are important in hiring and promotion decisions.

- They share the employees' view that interviews are more important than previous experience, and that cultural biases, language requirements and accreditation issues may limit the success of visible minority candidates.

- About half the management participants stated that there is some bias against visible minority individuals within the public service, and that diversity-related education for managers is required.

- Too little attention is paid to visible minority representation on hiring boards, and employment equity activities within their organizations are often highly restricted in scope.

- Overall, managers and executives did not believe that hiring and promotion processes are inherently biased or that there is much conscious discrimination. They attributed low visible minority representation to such factors as the relatively small qualified visible minority workforce in regions where recruitment is taking place, the unwillingness of some visible minority candidates to relocate, the absence of indeterminate hiring, and the unattractiveness of public service salaries. Some were skeptical about the management capacities of visible minority employees.

- Managers emphasized that employment equity results vary significantly by department and by location, and cited a number of "best practices", including effective training and internal mechanisms for addressing allegations of harassment.

CHAPTER SIX

Visible Minorities and the Private Sector

6.1 Introduction

Diversity is a key issue for the private sector. North American "companies are stepping up their efforts to address diversity issues. More businesses recognize that managing diversity is the key to future growth" (The Olsten Forum on Human Resource Issues and Trends, 1995). The question to be addressed is: what the public service can learn from how the federally-regulated private sector in Canada is faring in this regard.

The private sector sees the advantages of having a diverse workforce and sees diversity as an asset. The private sector is responsive to the clientele: "I need your business and I want you to see that I have representatives from your community." Some segments of the private sector even see the competitive edge of having visible minority staff as part of "the look". In addition, dealings with the Canadian Human Rights Commission help prod action on employment equity in the federally-regulated private sector -- those organizations are more concerned about the possible tarnished "image" and a resulting loss of market share. The fact that until recently, federal employment equity legislation only covered the private sector - and not the public service - could also be a factor.

In order to understand how the federally-regulated private sector handles the visible minority issue, a few firms in the banking, communications, transportation and other sectors were contacted and requested to fill out questionnaires. This was followed by interviews of their human resources staff. In addition, the former President of the Canadian Bankers' Association was interviewed. A repeated theme in these interviews and questionnaires was that diversity makes good business sense and it helps to serve the clientele better. As well, they were well aware of the negative social and economic implications of hiring a labour force that is not representative. According to a transportation company CEO, "representation does not happen as a wish list. It happens only if the organization wants it. Chasing a number is not sufficient," he added.

"If you pay only lip service to employment equity, you are not doing your organization any good" commented a banking executive. At least one major bank puts forth the hypothesis that their productivity has increased as a result of hiring, promoting and retaining visible minorities.

6.2 Hiring

Statistics reveal that the representation of visible minority hiring in the federally-regulated private sector is quite high, especially in the banks. Visible minority representation in the five major

banks (the Royal Bank, the Bank of Nova Scotia, the Bank of Montreal, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and the Toronto Dominion Bank) in 1995 ranged from 10.7% to 18.2%, compared with 9.1% for the Canadian labour force and 4.1% in the federal public service.

It was clear from the questionnaires and interviews that the "commitment of the CEO to employment equity" was a dominant factor for the current level of visible minority employees in the private sector. A second factor was the reputation of the firm as a "world-class equal opportunity employer": this was particularly true in the case of the banks. This reputation, it was said, helped to attract top quality candidates from all designated groups. Factors such as the nature of the work, job satisfaction, and salaries/benefits, while not unimportant, did not come anywhere near as important as the commitment at the top. This is somewhat in contrast to the public service where, according to both employee and management participants, there is rather lukewarm commitment at the top to employment equity and a rather poor reputation as an equal opportunity employer for visible minority groups.

The banks particularly recognize that "access to information on jobs is the most difficult" and try to make sure that it does not become a barrier. In fact, there is a healthy competition among the banks to recruit visible minority employees. To provide information, some banks hold regular "job fairs" which attract a high turnout.

6.3 Recruitment/selection

Internal job postings and selection based on performance ratings were the most commonly used tools for internal recruitment among private sector participants in the study. One of the major banks has a career information network to help employees. The banks make a deliberate effort to identify persons with potential for key positions using a combination of performance appraisals, interviews, and aspirations. They are often identified by committees outside the division in question. A "competency model" is developed and a list of employees with potential is prepared. Those identified are given training to prepare them for higher level positions. This might be a practice that the public sector can emulate.

As in the public service, a variety of traditional techniques are employed to recruit externally. Some banks advertise as "an employer that encourages and respects diversity". They also enable the applicants to see that they have a reasonable number of visible minority employees. The most common labour supply sources were: applicants' inventory, educational institutions, word of mouth referrals, advertising and professional associations. For banks, universities are an important "feeder" or talent pool for new recruits, especially in the context of their Asian banking strategy. Universities were not used as much by other sectors. Among these external recruitment channels, given the nature of the public sector and its need to hire more visible minorities, universities, applicants' inventory, professional associations and advertising appear suitable.

Unlike in the public service, factors such as the variety of types of work, use of languages other

than the official ones, visibility in the community, inclusive advertising, strong network and professional relationships with outreach recruiting sources, a visibly representative workforce, and work in larger centres are considered to be factors that encourage visible minority candidates to apply.

One of the most successful banks uses "behaviour-focused interviewing" instead of using "Canadian experience" as a means of screening out applicants. Even if potential applicants have never worked before, they are asked what they did in certain difficult situations to discern their attitudes and problem-solving abilities.

In some banks most of the recruitment is targeted. Branch managers receive a resource guide and have access to training tools, though this is not specific to visible minority candidates. Their advertisements are checked for cultural/racial bias and specify that they are an equal opportunity employer.

6.4 Internal recruitment

Access to information is also key with respect to internal recruitment in the private sector employers involved in the study. Once access to information is guaranteed, the onus is on the applicants. The "entitlement mentality" that the jobs should go to a certain group or groups is no longer valid, private sector representatives pointed out. Job information is posted on career information networks so that anyone can access it. Some banks have Internet web pages as well. In a restructuring context, first chance of refusal is given to those affected adversely (i.e., job loss), second to internal candidates and third to external ones. The composition of the labour force is constantly monitored and if they see that visible minority employees are leaving at a disproportionate rate, greater emphasis is placed on hiring from that group.

In order to secure information on jobs, a private sector practice that would be worth considering in the public service is the use of a 1-800 number to talk to the Diversity in the Workplace/ Equality Coordinator. The Office of the Coordinator conducts surveys, focus groups and open forums to gather information. One bank uses an open staffing system and posts all jobs including those of the executives. Employment equity advisory committees have been established in some non-banking sectors. Other firms use regular workplace climate surveys, newsletters, 1-800 numbers, and Intranet (WAN) to keep employees informed.

6.5 Part-time/temporary work

In most private sector firms, part-time and temporary workers are a significant part of the hiring strategy. This provides an opportunity for the firm to observe employees' performance and recruit permanently those who show promise. The visible minority groups, according to the private sector, accept part-time or temporary jobs more often than the others. In one communication firm, 23.3% of its part-time employees are from visible minority groups. This pool is the main source

of recruitment of permanent employees. Some of the employment practices of the private sector regarding part-time or temporary work may not be feasible in the unionized setting of the public service. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial for the public service to see to what extent any elements of this could be used.

6.6 Outreach

Virtually all private sector employers interviewed provided outreach to visible minority communities. These include: teaming up with boards of education in what is known as the "Change Your Future" program and participating in a youth program to encourage youth to stay in school; matching them with a manager as mentor and role model; introducing special programs such as one by a bank in the Atlantic region to hire visible minority employees; and sending job posters to outreach groups and local community associations before they are posted elsewhere.

6.7 Upper level jobs

The private sector shares with the public service its lack of success in having visible minority employees adequately represented at higher levels. Only 2.4% of EXs in the public service in 1995 were visible minorities. The comparable figure for the five major banks was between 2.4% and 5.4%. (The visible minority availability figure for senior managers in the Canadian labour force was 6.6% as per the 1991 census). For middle management in 1995, visible minority representation in the banks ranged from 9.8% to 14.1% as compared to 7.3% for the Canadian labour force. Though there are many visible minority middle-managers in the banks, they have yet to reach the uppermost level. A mentoring or "buddy" system is considered to be helpful, as it was for women, to help visible minority employees move along their career path. Though some come to middle levels laterally, most come from lower ranks. Promotion rates of visible minorities in some banks exceed the general rate for all employees. Transportation companies have targeted better representation of visible minorities at higher levels as well.

6.8 Training and development

Human resources staff and interviewers in the private sector organizations involved in the study received training on human rights and employment equity more frequently than in the public sector. Almost all the firms had front-line staff receive information and training on human rights and employment equity legislation. Banks which are most successful in the hiring of visible minority employees have a "zero tolerance" policy for discrimination. Interviewers are trained to do bias-free interviewing.

6.9 Promoting diversity

The public service can learn from some of the following private sector practices to promote diversity: tracking course attendance and leadership training to ensure representation of designated

groups and to see that career information network is universally accessible to all employees; establishing career development centres across the country; tracking hires, promotions and terminations for visible minority employees; and providing access to employment counsellors and employment equity assistance both on line and in person.

6.10 Performance appraisal

Performance appraisal is an important tool that helps the upward mobility of employees in the private sector organizations with which we spoke. In some firms, performance appraisal is done twice a year and career development meetings and individual career development discussions are held. Some transportation companies consider performance appraisals "paramount" and track them to increase efficiency, improve quality, improve the individual's ability to work with other employees and enhance performance.

6.11 Comfort level

Most firms participating in the study had a formal or informal mechanism for consultations with visible minority employees. In order to raise the comfort level of employees, all of them had policies to make the workplace a respectful and accommodating environment such as providing for religious holidays for minorities. Flexible work arrangements were in place to respect religious practices. For example, leave with pay is given for up to three days. "Reasonable accommodation" is practised in most firms.

All the private sector firms interviewed have explicit policies and/or mechanisms to deal with complaints of racial discrimination or harassment. Many have a harassment-free workplace policy. Most have a well-defined process for reporting, investigating and dealing with cases related to racial discrimination or harassment.

6.12 Taking the initiative

Some notable initatives of private sector organizations involved in the study were as follows:

- Outreach, through active involvement in the communities they serve.
- The deliberate promotion of networking opportunities.
- The establishment of employee development centres.
- The establishment of a performance-feedback mechanism based on input from supervisors, peers, subordinates and clients.
- The publication and distribution of guides and materials relevant to the employment equity designated groups.

- The establishment of diversity councils and other consultation mechanisms.
- Efforts to give internal recognition to departments that have done well in promoting diversity.
- Regular employee surveys to learn about employees' concerns and interests.
- Preparation of demographic profiles of communities served.

6.13 Lessons for the public service

Some of the private sector firms offered suggestions to the public service. They strongly felt that since the federal government exists for all Canadians, the public service should reflect Canadian diversity in its workforce. They suggest that top management of the public sector must be committed to the process of hiring and promoting more visible minority employees. In order to do so, there must be a crystal clear policy on the direction and objectives of the program including an education and training program for all personnel. All complaints of discrimination or wrong doing must be thoroughly investigated and the consequences, if the allegations are founded, should be severe.

The public service, it was suggested, should establish competencies and performance measurements, if possible quantitative, based on performance appraisals. The setting up of performance goals with time frames that are specific, meaningful, attainable and relevant was also proposed. Providing development opportunities for visible minority employees that involve temporary assignments would be helpful as well.

The private sector firms emphasized the importance of having a large talent pool from which one can draw middle and upper level managers on the basis of merit, not entitlement. However, if an organization concentrates on hiring visible minority employees only, a backlash is possible.

Private sector representatives involved in the study generally felt that the public service may have an image problem to deal with. The question posed was: "If you are successful elsewhere, why would you go into the government?"

Summary: Chapter 6
Visible Minorities and the Private Sector

This chapter describes policies and practices that contribute to the higher representation of visible minorities in the federally-regulated private sector, in comparison with the public service.

- Success in recruiting and retaining visible minority individuals depends on senior-level commitment and concern for the firm's reputation, driven by competitive concerns. Private sector companies believe that a diverse workforce will help them serve an increasingly diverse clientele and break into global markets.

- Participants emphasized that equity does not just happen -- it must be actively promoted. This takes places through:

  - Disseminating information on employment opportunities as widely as possible;

  - Reaching out to visible minority communities;

  - Identifying and eliminating possible biases in employment systems;

  - Providing diversity and equity training to human resources staff and managers; and

  - Encouraging innovation

Continued on next page

Chapter 6 summary, continued

- Other important initiatives included:
  - Anti-discrimination and accommodation policies;
  - Mentoring and career development programs;
  - Employee consultation and feedback processes; and
  - Statistical tracking to pinpoint problem areas
- Participants noted certain advantages in the private sector when it comes to the recruitment of visible minority candidates, such as the need for employees fluent in languages other than English and French, employment concentration in larger urban centres, and more flexible employment procedures.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

It has been said that the mark of a great country is the way in which it treats its minorities. A corollary of this might be that the measure of a great public service is the way in which it treats its minorities, in this case the visible minorities. Regrettably, both visible minority employees and public service managers, including the executives, state that bias and subtle barriers against visible minorities persist in the public service. Evidence also indicates that the Canadian-born visible minority employees fare no better than their foreign-born counterparts.

Given the challenges of our increasingly diverse and globalizing world, it is imperative for the country to have a first-class, representative public service "ouverte aux talents" -- one that draws on the best talents available in its diverse population.

It is against this backdrop that we venture to formulate a few recommendations. They are, of course, greatly influenced by the thoughtful ideas that came from so many who participated in the study. The recommendations are put forward in the hope that the appropriate authorities might consider them worthy of closer examination.

7.2 Recommendations

The recommendations are grouped under the following headings:

(1) strategic planning.
(2) the environment.
(3) recruitment,
(4) selection,
(5) fair and equitable treatment.
(6) career development, and
(7) accountability.

Strategic Planning

Top management of the public sector needs to commit themselves to the process of hiring and promoting visible minority employees at rates which reflect their availability in the labour market and help correct the effects of traditional under-representation. There needs to be a crystal-clear policy on the direction and objective of the program that is essential to make the federal public

service reflect Canadian diversity in the workforce. This requires careful strategic planning with the larger goals of representativeness and efficient service for all Canadians.

- We recommend that in order to come up with a workable strategy to address the issues of visible minorities in the public service, a committee headed by appropriate personnel in the Privy Council Office and with the help of the Deputy Minister's Committee now looking at "La Relève : The Next Generation" , the Treasury Board Secretariat, and the Public Service Commission, be formed with a clear mandate and deadlines. Input from the private sector could be sought to assist in the process in view of their success in hiring, retaining and promoting visible minority employees. Lessons from the successful women's employment equity program could be of assistance in this regard.

The Environment

There are three areas to be considered in the context of the overall environment -- Canadian society in general, the public service, and the visible minority community.

- We recommend that initiatives be taken to create a favourable environment for visible minorities in Canadian society in general. It is important to keep in mind that currently about one out of eight Canadians is a member of a visible minority group. The changing nature of Canada and the role of visible minorities and diversity should be publicized through carefully prepared information campaigns that involve appropriate departments and agencies so that the Canadian public can appreciate the benefits of providing equitable treatment to this segment of the population.

- It is recommended that public servants in general, and managers in particular, be sensitized to the need for full and fair representation of visible minority employees in their ranks. Emphasis could be placed on the contributions of visible minorities in the past and the present, and on the increasing importance of diversity for the future of the public service. The main point that needs to be conveyed is that visible minority employees do not necessarily need special treatment -- what is required is just treatment. Private sector employers that have been successful in this area could be invited to give workshops to the public servants on what was done in that sector and what benefits accrued from adequate representation of visible minority employees in their workforce.

- Visible minority communities seem to have largely written off the public service as a place for the best and brightest of their youth. The negative experiences of visible minority groups in the public service in general and of their parents and relatives in particular, lack of equal promotional opportunities and better salaries, and benefits and opportunities available elsewhere to those who are capable have made public service a less desirable place to seek employment. To most of the visible minority community, it seems to have become the last career choice. Much work needs to be done to change this image.

Showcasing the achievements of successful visible minority public servants as role models for youth is one of the initiatives that should be considered.

Recruitment

- The evidence presented in the study has clearly demonstrated that the private sector has been much more successful than the public service in hiring, retaining and promoting visible minority employees. Therefore, we recommend a comprehensive review of private sector practices in hiring, especially regarding representation of "client groups" and the competitive advantage to the country of drawing on Canada's diverse workforce. Such a review could examine the feasibility of increased exchanges between the public and private sectors.

- Participants expressed the view that dissemination of information on job opportunities is not taking place efficiently. It is therefore recommended that this be closely examined by the Public Service Commission with the goal of removing completely lack of awareness of opportunities as a barrier. The rule could be to post all jobs, including those for executives. The federally-regulated private sector, especially the banks, has much to offer in this regard. A combination of techniques could be used: 1-800 numbers, electronic bulletin boards, the Internet, announcements in the ethnic press, and other techniques as appropriate. In advertisements or job postings in the public service, a consistent and standardized format should be used.

- The Public Service Employment Act and regulations should be examined to see if and how they adversely affect visible minority representation in the public service. For instance, *the Public Service Employment Act*, reads that "...whenever it is in the best interest of the public service... to give preference in appointments to qualified candidates who reside in the area served by a local office over qualified candidates who do not so reside." Use of this provision should be tracked to see if, on balance, it is having a negative effect on visible minority candidates. Similarly, if the Public Service Commission is to delegate staffing authority and confer flexibility in its systems, it must ensure that the staffing actions collectively do not have a negative effect on designated groups, especially visible minority employees. Furthermore, a monitoring and accountability mechanism should ensure consistency in the implementation of policies, procedures and practices with regard to the use (or lack thereof) of employment equity provisions for visible minority groups and provide a mechanism to review carefully the impact of discretionary decision-making powers.

- The usefulness of outreach as a dynamic means of passing on job-related information to under-represented visible minority communities has been well recognized in the private sector. A youth-oriented program along the lines of the "Leadership for Tomorrow Today" to help visible minority youth to find summer jobs and secure mentors could be considered. Term appointments would be helpful for visible minority recruits to learn

about the public service and for the public service managers to observe the capabilities of visible minority employees.

- Tomorrow's public service executives are more likely to come from Canadian universities with an ample representation of visible minority youth. Without an adequate campus recruitment program, it would not be easy to get them into the public service. Therefore, revival of campus recruitment would be in order.

- Foreign credentials often pose a problem for visible minority candidates as seen in the focus group discussions. The PSC can be a repository of information on equivalencies on the basis of work that has been accomplished in several provinces such as Alberta, Ontario, and British Columbia. A pilot project on this could be established in Ottawa with the assistance of the three universities and community colleges in the Ottawa-Hull area.

Selection

- Both employee and management groups have indicated that the public service managers and human resources personnel lack sensitivity for, and knowledge of, visible minority cultures. Therefore, sensitivity training and cultural education for all involved in hiring and managing should be compulsory. In particular, tests should be reviewed to ensure that they take cultural differences into account.

- The private sector has introduced innovative techniques for screening candidates. It is recommended that the use of "behaviour-focused interviewing" be considered for screening out candidates rather than lack of Canadian experience. In assessing experience, the visible minority candidates' experience in their former country, if they are foreign born, should not be ignored in the context of the diverse skills required in the modern-day workplace.

- Visible minority employees have indicated that selection boards are often devoid of visible minority representation. This needs to be changed. There should be credible visible minority representation on all selection boards as was customary while the employment equity program for women was in full gear. If such persons are not available within the public service, they should be brought in from the outside.

- Public service employee participants, both visible and non visible minorities, have stated that selection criteria used for jobs are often not relevant to the jobs in question. We recommend that this receive close scrutiny to make such selection criteria more relevant to the jobs in question.

- The subjective use of "personal suitability" was said to be a major barrier for visible minority groups in getting access to employment and promotional opportunities in the

public service. The way in which "personal suitability" is defined and assessed should be changed. The elements that presently come under "personal suitability" should be made transparent by clearly spelling out what is being looked for and by publicizing the requirements along with qualifications for the job. Alternatively, it is proposed to drastically reduce the marks given for personal suitability with no separate minimum fixed for this factor.

Fair and equitable treatment

- The process and procedures for investigating allegations of racial discrimination and other human rights violations in the public service seem to be less than adequate, as reported by visible minority employees and agreed to by a segment of hiring/managing staff. We recommend that those responsible for implementing anti-discrimination policies should ensure that there is complete and speedy investigation of all complaints of racial discrimination or harassment. The investigation should be conducted by impartial persons not involved in the incidents, and those responsible should be made aware of what the consequences will be if the allegations are founded.

- Lack of appropriate representation of visible minority employees in the public service is partly the result of lack of training and briefing of management and those involved in hiring/managing functions. In order for the authorities to ensure that fair and equitable treatment is accorded to all potential candidates, such training/briefing should occur. The training should emphasise the moral and legal context of the government's obligations to make the federal public service representative of all its diverse components including the visible minority community. It is important to appoint as employment equity co-ordinators those who really understand and are fully committed to the program and its goals.

- The new *Employment Equity Act*, which now covers the federal public service, recently came into effect. In preparation for the implementation of the *Act*, upper and middle managers should be provided a thorough briefing on the principles and practical implications of the legislation. Adequate resources should be made available to implement the new *Act*.

Career Development

- Visible minority support or advisory groups have been functioning in a number of departments and agencies and their presence and advice have been positive for visible minority public servants. In order to enable such groups to continue more effectively, official status and material assistance should be granted to such groups in departments and agencies. They should be established in departments and agencies where they currently do not exist. Among their activities could be coaching of visible minority employees on how to break the "glass ceiling" and on North American management styles.

- The private sector has greatly benefited from career information available to all employees so that meritorious and ambitious employees can further their careers. In the public service the network has been informal and only available to "insiders". Therefore, a career information network should be created in the public service to be helpful in particular to visible minority employees.

- A data bank of visible minority employees should be set up to help managers interested in reaching out to possible visible minority candidates. This should be based on the use of a combination of performance appraisals, interviews and expressions of aspirations, usually by a committee outside the division where the public servant works. A "competency model" to identify persons with potential for different levels should be developed and those who are chosen be given training to prepare themselves for higher level positions.

- The performance appraisal system in the public service has been criticized by employees, while the private sector extols its virtues as a career planning tool. The use of objective criteria for performance appraisals might be developed. The public sector could try to learn from the private sector in this regard. Performance measurement, if possible quantitative, should be established for all staff.

- Mentoring or the "buddy system" was mentioned by the private sector and the visible minority employees as a means of giving the visible minority employees a fair shake in the public service, as it did informally for women. Therefore, we propose the creation of a system of official "mentors" for all staff and particularly for visible minorities.

- In the modern workplace, training and skills hold the key for career advancement. Therefore, provision should be made for training and upgrading the skills of visible minorities.

- The evidence suggests that visible minority employees do not get as many acting appointments at higher levels compared to other employees. Therefore, we recommend that visible minorities be given more acting and targeted assignments on an organised basis so that they can get the necessary experience to compete more effectively for higher level positions. A corollary to this would be the establishment of a developmental program for potential executives from the visible minority group that would include placing such staff in acting positions, and sending them on the Career Assignment Program, with appropriate follow up on their career path.

- Most focus group participants stated that acting appointments to higher level positions go on for an unlimited period. This leads to frustration for the acting employees, loss of morale and charges of exploitation. Therefore, we recommend that in acting appointments, a person be confirmed in the acting position after two years to stop the practice of always asking them to act but never being appointed.

- More visible minorities should be placed in feeder groups on a systematic and planned basis to provide those with the interest and the talent the opportunity to enter the middle and senior management levels.

Accountability

- We recommend that greater stress be placed on accountability for public service managers and that, with the strategic plan developed as a framework and a regime of targets and time-tables (system-wide and departmental), bench marks be established against which progress can be judged. Managers should be rewarded for meeting such targets and penalised if they fail to do so.

- Visible minority advisory committees should be given access to the Deputy Minister's office to provide advice and feedback on progress in employment equity for visible minority employees; to help serve as mentors; to play a role in vetting job descriptions; to participate in "outreach" activities; and to help in the search for outside candidates for selection boards.

In conclusion, it may be stated that if no corrective action is taken, the public service in future will lag even farther behind the private sector with respect to visible minority representation. This is evident from the low rates of visible minority hires in the public service in recent years, as seen in Annex 3. The public service needs to remove systemic barriers that may have an adverse impact on visible minority candidates, to make sure that real merit is recognised and rewarded. Incentives should be provided to managers at all levels to ensure diversity is achieved in their workforce. As a last resort, managers who do not seem to be impressed by the arguments for diversity should be pressed through accountability mechanisms to advance the goals of fairness and equity in public service employment practices.

Summary: Chapter 7 Recommendations

The following is a summary of recommendations aimed at improving the representation of visible minorities in the federal public service.

- Consistent senior-level commitment to employment equity in the public service must be demonstrated. One step in this direction would be the establishment of a PCO-based committee to oversee work in the area.
- Education is essential. Both the wider public and public servants should be provided with information on the benefits of diversity, and "success stories" should be showcased for visible minority communities.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that all employment systems and procedures are clear and fair, and that job requirements and assessment tools are relevant and objective.
- A mechanism is needed to widely disseminate information on employment opportunities so that all interested and qualified candidates can apply.
- Visible minority representation should be nurtured through outreach initiatives, mentoring and career development programs, and targeted training.
- The Public Service Commission should establish data banks containing information about foreign credentials and their equivalencies, so that visible minority candidates are not unfairly screened out on that basis.

Continued on next page

Chapter 7 summary, continued

- Visible minority employees should be provided with more opportunities for acting appointments and all employees in an acting position for over two years should be confirmed in that position.
- The public service should review its policies and procedures related to harassment and discrimination. These should be evaluated and improved, drawing from best practices by specific government departments and private sector employers.
- Visible minority consultation committees should be established in each department and have access to Deputy Ministers.
- Managers should have greater flexibility for achieving diversity-related objectives and should be held accountable for results.

ANNEX 1

Questionnaires/Focus Groups

The study involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Four questionnaires were involved. They were distributed mostly by the participating departments/agencies. Various methods were used by each department/agency in distributing them. Questionnaire 1 for those with hiring/managing responsibilities and Questionnaire 2 for EX group members were distributed by the departments/agencies to a sample of individuals (a specific number). Questionnaire 3 for visible minorities and Questionnaire 4 for the control group were distributed in different ways by different departments/agencies. Some distributed Questionnaires 3 and 4 to everyone in their department/agency through e-mail or other means. Others sent the questionnaire for visible minorities only to those who had self identified. The remaining announced through e-mail the availability of the questionnaires and those who were interested were free to contact the consultants.

Several individuals contacted the consultants directly (especially through union newsletters and word of mouth) and requested the questionnaires. All questionnaires were responded to on a voluntary basis. Questionnaires 1 and 2 were identical except for the question on racial origin. Questionnaire 3 was to be responded to only by visible minority public servants while Questionnaire 4 was designed for non-visible minority public servants. Because of the nature of the questionnaire distribution, it is not possible to calculate a response rate for the questionnaires.

As can be expected in any survey, a few questionnaires were not usable. Some had not been completed beyond the first page. Some had misunderstood the term "visible minority" and filled out Questionnaire 3 claiming to be so. They were primarily, aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, immigrants born in Southern European countries, and some who claimed visibility because of being "white male."

Out of 1,712 questionnaires received 1,612 were usable. They were as follows:

Questionnaires

Type of Questionnaire	Number of Questionnaires Received	Number of Questionnaires Used
1. Staffing/Managing Group	188	159
2. EXs	83	74
3. Visible Minorities	1,096	1,063
4. Control Group	345	316
Total	1,712	1,612

An important question that could be raised is how representative were the questionnaires received. It was impossible to answer this question in the case of Questionnaires 1 and 2. However, the question could be answered for Questionnaire 3 and to some extent Questionnaire 4. This can be done by comparing some of the important characteristics of the universe with the characteristics of those who responded to the questionnaire.

The number of visible minorities who responded to the questionnaire was close to 12% of the visible minority employees in the public service. The comparison between some of the key characteristics of the public servants who self-identified shows that while the study did not use a systematic sampling scheme, the survey by and large was somewhat representative of the visible minorities in the public service in terms of sex and occupational category.

Table 1A
Comparison of Visible Minorities
in the Federal Public Service and the Study Sample
By Gender

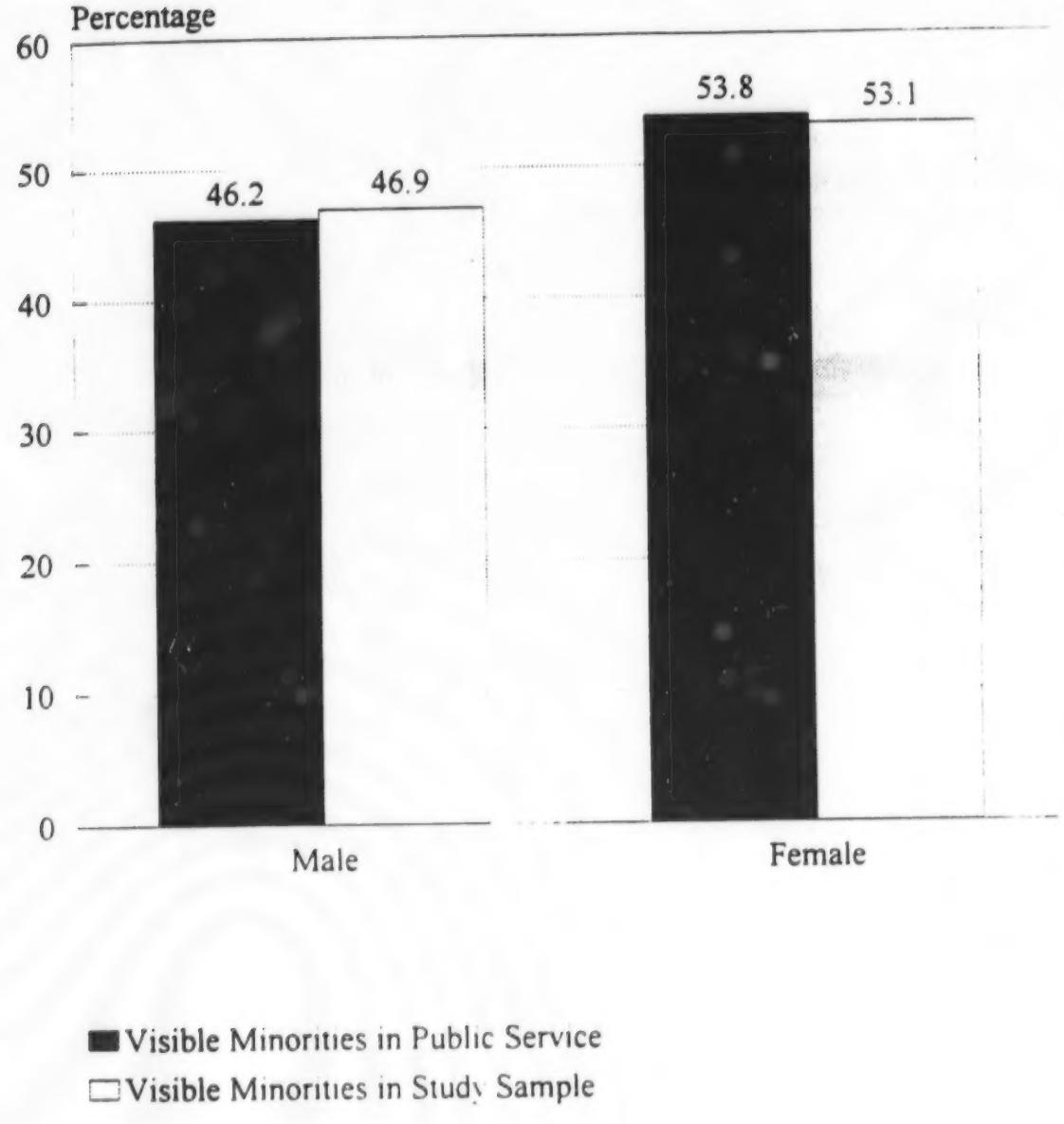
Gender	Visible Minorities	Study Sample
Women	46.2%	46.9%
Men	53.8%	53.1%

Table 1B
Comparison of Visible Minorities
in the Federal Public Service and the Study Sample
By Occupational Category

Occupational Category	Visible Minorities	Study Sample
Executive	1.0%	1.0%
Scientific & Professional	24.5%	26.3%
Administrative & Foreign Service	33.6%	35.5%
Technical	6.9%	7.8%
Administrative Support	28.1%	26.1%
Operational	5.9%	3.3%

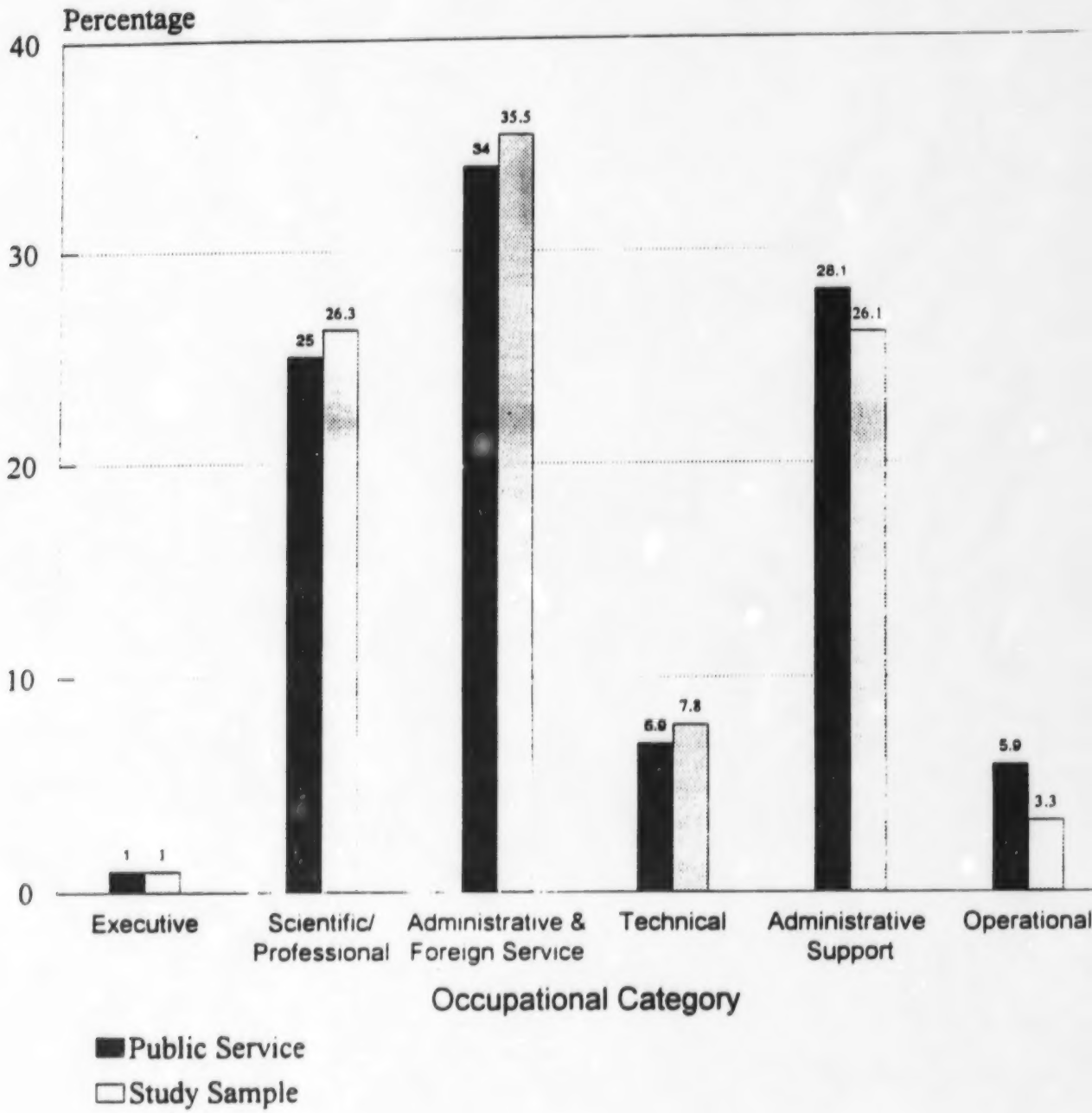
Charts 1 and 2 show graphically the similarities with respect to gender and occupational distribution between the visible minority population in the public service as a whole and those who participated in the study.

Chart 1: Visible Minorities in Public Service and Study Sample by Sex



Source: Treasury Board Secretariat & John Samuel & Associates Inc.

Chart 2: Occupational Categories of Visible Minorities in Public Service and Study Sample



Sources: Treasury Board Secretariat & John Samuel & Associates Inc.

In terms of the origins of visible minority employees in the study sample, the three major ethnic groups in the visible minority population in Canada (Chinese, South Asians and Blacks) were also the major groups that responded as seen in Chart 3.

The control group had 62.6% women compared to 47.4% in the public service. Occupationally over 85% of the sample belonged to the administrative and foreign service group and the administrative support group compared to 61.4% in the public service as a whole

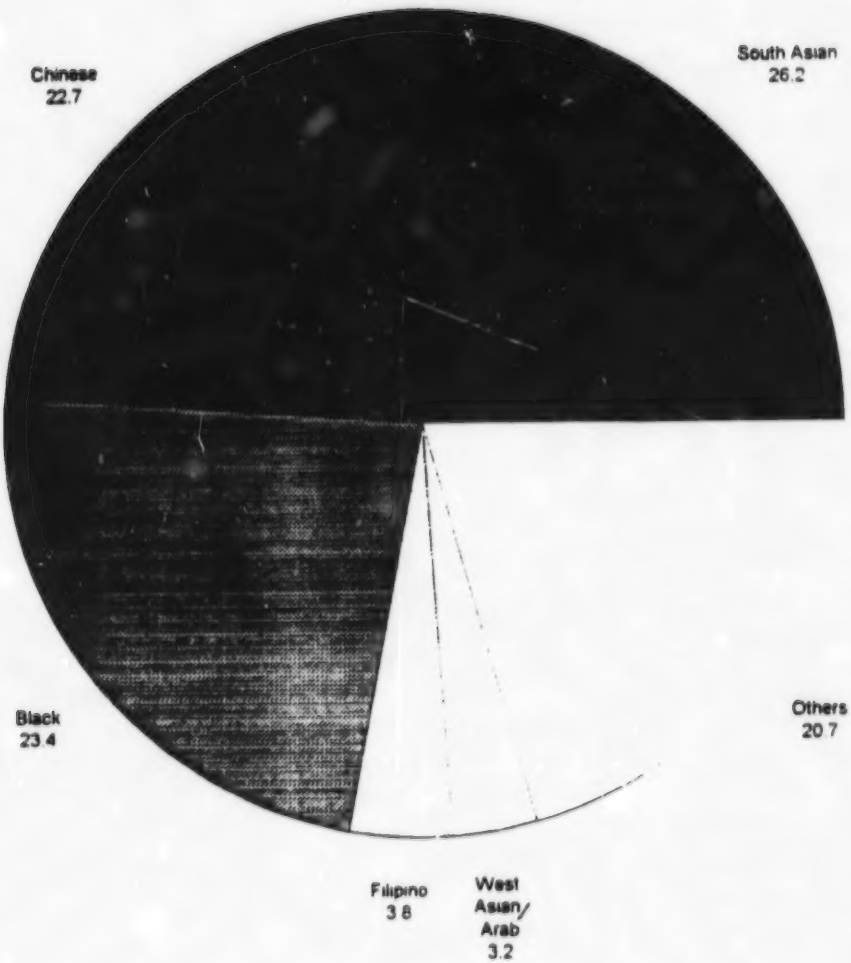
Focus Groups

Focus Groups by Type

Type of Focus Group	Number of Participants
Visible Minorities	312
Control Group (Non-Visible Minorities)	32
Hiring/Managing Group	23
Former Visible Minority Public Servants	11
Total	**378**

Chart 3: Origins of Visible Minorities

Study Sample



Source: John Samuel & Associates Inc.

ANNEX 2

Tables from Questionnaires 3 (Visible Minority Public Servants) and 4 (Control Group - Non-Visible Minority Public Servants)

Table 1
Level of Education

Level of Education	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Elementary completed	0.5%	0.8%
Secondary completed	6.1%	16.3%
Some college/university	31.3%	31.0%
Undergraduate university degree	31.1%	31.8%
Graduate degree	6.3%	3.8%

Table 2
Age Distribution

Age Groups	Visible Minorities	Control Group
30 or less	17.9%	10.5%
31-40	28.4%	34.6%
41-50	33.0%	43.6%
51 or more	20.7%	11.3%

Table 3
Years in Public Service

Years Employed in the Public Service	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Less than one	6.2%	3.9%
1-4 years	16.6%	11.3%
5-9 years	28.2%	25.1%
10 or more	49.0%	59.9%

Table 4
Region of Work

Region	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Atlantic	19.8%	10.2%
Quebec	5.6%	7.6%
Ontario	51.8%	55.9%
Prairies	8.5%	12.3%
British Columbia & the Territories	13.3%	14.0%
Outside Canada	1.0%	0.0%

Table 5
Employment Status

Employment Status	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Indeterminate	83.7%	88.2%
Determinate	8.3%	5.9%
Casual	2.0%	2.8%
Part-time	1.3%	0.7%
Other	4.7%	2.4%

Table 6
Source of Job Information to Enter Public Service

Source	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Advertisement	31.0%	25.6%
Word of mouth	22.4%	25.2%
Walk-in	12.5%	12.6%

Table 7
Required to Pass Written Tests

Required to Pass Written Tests	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	65.0%	64.3%
No	29.7%	30.2%
Do not remember	5.3%	5.5%

Table 8
Test Related to the Position

Test Related to the Position	Visible Minorities	Control Group
No response	32.3%	32.8%
Yes	49.0%	50.2%
No	12.9%	12.7%
Do not remember	5.8%	4.3%

Table 9
Required to Attend an Interview

Required to Attend an Interview	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	92.0%	92.6%
No	7.0%	6.6%
Do not remember	1.0%	0.8%

Table 10
Interview Questions Related to the Position

Interview Questions Related to the Position	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	82.5%	90.4%
No	10.3%	4.6%
Do not remember	7.2%	5.0%

Table 11
Ever Served on a Selection Board

Ever Served on a Selection Board	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	30.0%	56.4%
No	70.0%	43.6%

Table 12
Participation on Selection Boards

Participation on Selection Boards	Visible Minorities	Control Group
2 or less	59.5%	53.6%
3-4	20.4%	28.6%
5-6	8.6%	6.4%
7 or more	11.5%	11.4%

Table 13
Can Identify Policies/Practices Discouraging Visible Minorities' Entry

Can Identify Policies/Practices Discouraging Visible Minorities' Entry	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	43.5%	16.3%
No	56.5%	83.7%

Table 14
In the Same Position Since Entry to Public Service

In the Same Position Since Entry to Public Service	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	34.2%	23.6%
No	65.8%	76.4%

Table 15A
Length of Time in the Same Position

Period of Time	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Five years or less	53.0%	48.1%
6-10	27.6%	25.0%
11 or more	19.4%	26.9%

Table 15B
By Choice, in the Same Position

By Choice, in the Same Position	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	26.2%	37.1%
No	73.8%	62.9%

Table 16
Number of Promotions Received in Last Seven Years

Number of Promotions Received in Last Seven Years	Visible Minorities	Control Group
None	52.6%	45.0%
One	29.7%	29.1%
Two	11.3%	12.4%
Three or more	6.4%	13.5%

Table 17
Have Been in an Acting Position at a Higher Level

Have Been in an Acting Position at a Higher Level	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	57.2%	76.6%
No	42.8%	23.5%

Table 18
How Last Promotion was Received

How Last Promotion was Received	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Formal request	4.0%	2.5%
Through performance appraisal	8.5%	5.9%
Supervisor's request	11.4%	10.8%
Competition	59.4%	66.1%
Other	16.7%	14.7%

Table 19A
Applied for Competition in the Last Seven Years

Applied for Competition in the Last Seven Years	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	75.7%	73.6%
No	24.3%	26.4%

Table 19B
Number of Competitions Applied for in the Last Seven Years

Number of Competitions Applied for in the Last Seven Years	Visible Minorities	Control Group
2 or less	40.9%	51.8%
3-4	28.0%	24.4%
5-6	16.8%	10.7%
7 or more	14.3%	13.1%

Table 19C
Reason for Not Applying for Competitions in the Last Seven Years

Reason for Not Applying for Competitions in the Last Seven Years	Visible Minorities	Control Group
No chance of winning	25.1%	15.0%
Competition process unfair	27.0%	16.7%
Not qualified	9.3%	6.7%
Not enough experience	6.7%	3.3%
Not interested	10.4%	21.7%
Other	21.5%	36.6%

Table 20
Do Best Qualified Receive Promotions

Do Best Qualified Receive Promotions	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	23.4%	25.7%
No	76.6%	74.3%

Table 21A
Lateral Moves/Assignments in the Last Seven Years

Lateral Moves/Assignments in the Last Seven Years	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	60.0%	66.4%
No	40.0%	33.6%

Table 21B
By Choice, No Lateral Moves/Assignments in the Last Seven Years

By Choice, No Lateral Moves/Assignments in the Last Seven Years	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	46.0%	67.0%
No	54.0%	33.0%

Table 22
Can Identify Policies/Practices in Promotion Process Discouraging for Visible Minorities

Can Identify Policies/Practices in Promotion Process Discouraging for Visible Minorities	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	47.8%	20.0%
No	52.2%	80.0%

Table 23
Performance Appraisal Consistently Applied

Performance Appraisal Consistently Applied	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	35.5%	20.2%
No	64.5%	79.8%

Table 24
Performance Appraisal Job Related

Performance Appraisal Job Related	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	68.5%	73.8%
No	31.5%	26.2%

Table 25
Performance Appraisal Valuable in Attaining Full Potential

Performance Appraisal Valuable in Attaining Full Potential	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	30.3%	26.8%
No	69.7%	73.2%

Table 26
Policies/Practices in Performance Appraisal Process Discouraging Visible Minorities

Policies/Practices in Performance Appraisal Process Discouraging Visible Minorities	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	32.7%	13.8%
No	67.3%	86.2%

Table 27
Working Conditions in the Public Service Conducive to Higher Level of Production/Achievement

Working Conditions in the Public Service Conducive to Higher Level of Production/Achievement	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	36.6%	32.4%
No	63.4%	67.6%

Table 28
Working Conditions Discouraging/Creating Obstacles

Working Conditions Discouraging/Creating Obstacles	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	39.3%	20.0%
No	60.7%	80.0%

Table 29
Should Public Service Implement Special Measures for Visible Minorities

Should Public Service Implement Special Measures for Visible Minorities	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	67.0%	25.9%
No	15.7%	56.6%
Uncertain	17.3%	17.5%

Table 30A
Witnessed or Subjected to Discrimination in Employment

Witnessed or Subjected to Discrimination in Employment	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	48.3%	28.6%
No	36.8%	62.9%
Uncertain	14.9%	8.5%

Table 30B
Action Taken
When Witnessed or Subjected to Discrimination in Employment

Action Taken When Witnessed or Subjected to Discrimination in Employment	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Complained to Supervisor	15.1%	12.8%
Went to Union	11.8%	7.3%
Filed Formal Complaint	8.6%	8.3%
Discussed with Discriminator	11.1%	17.4%
Reported to Human Resources	4.9%	6.4%
Reported to Senior Manager	9.7%	13.8%
Did Nothing	26.6%	28.5%
Reported to Employee Assistance	4.1%	1.8%
Reported to Human Rights Staff	2.9%	0.9%
Other	5.2%	2.8%

Table 31
Do Employment Equity and Human Rights Policies Enhance Workplace Quality

Do Employment Equity and Human Rights Policies Enhance Workplace Quality	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	58.8%	48.0%
No	16.1%	29.7%
Uncertain	25.1%	22.3%

Table 32
Feel Comfortable in the Workplace

Feel Comfortable in the Workplace	Visible Minorities	Control Group
Yes	68.7%	73.2%
No	17.5%	15.8%
Uncertain	13.8%	11.0%

ANNEX 3

Tables on visible minority representation, promotions and hires

Table 1
Representation of Visible Minorities
in the Public Service and the Federally-regulated Private Sector
1987-1995

Sector	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Public Service *	2.7%	2.9%	3.1%	3.5%	3.6%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	4.1%
Private Sector	5.0%	5.7%	6.7%	7.1%	7.6%	7.9%	8.1%	8.3%	8.8%

Sources Treasury Board Secretariat: Annual and Special Reports; HRDC: Annual Reports on Employment Equity.

Table 2
Promotions of Visible Minorities
in the Public Service and the Federally-regulated Private Sector
1987-1995

Sector	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Public Service *	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.9%	N/A	4.0%	3.9%	4.1%
Private Sector	6.9%	7.6%	9.4%	10.9%	10.8%	11.1%	10.7%	11.1%	11.6%

N/A Not available
Sources Treasury Board Secretariat: Annual and Special Reports and Canadian Human Rights Commission Reports.

Table 3
Percentages of Visible Minority Hires in the Public Service
1988-1995

Sector	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Public Service Hires*	3.3%	4.0%	4.6%	5.0%	5.5%	5.2%	2.7%	2.9%

Source Canadian Human Rights Commission, 1996

* From 1987 to 1991, Treasury Board Secretariat reported by calendar year; thereafter, reporting is by fiscal year. From 1987 to March, 1993, TBC reported on indeterminate employees and term employees of six months and over. After March, 1993, the statistics also cover term employees of three months and over.

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